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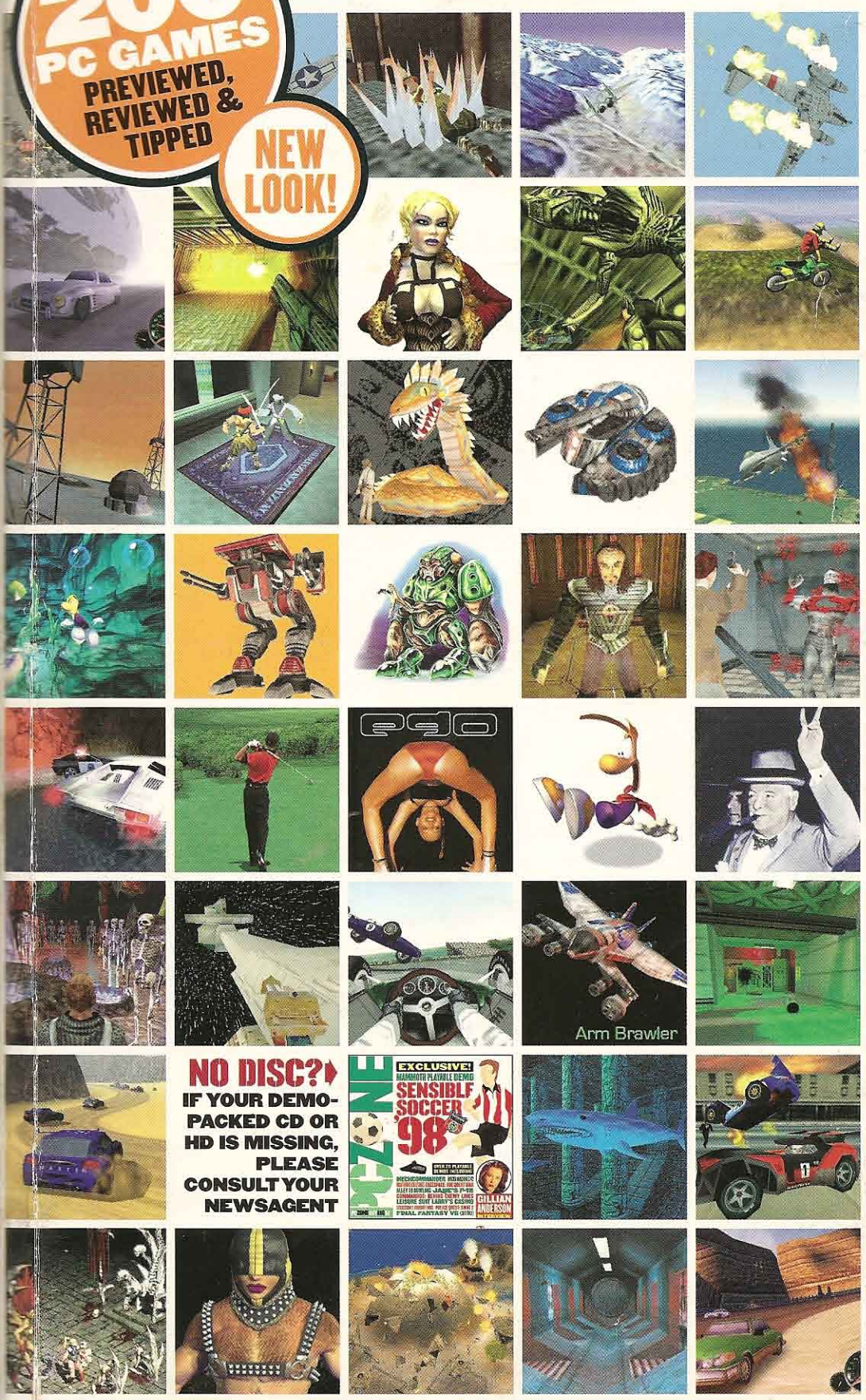
PC ZONE

#66 AUG 1998

172 PAGES!

OVER 200 PC GAMES PREVIEWED, REVIEWED & TIPPED

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50 MOST WANTED!

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*Definitions of 'ruin' may vary

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WHAT'S ON THE COVER DISC? FULL DETAILS PAGE 160

£4.99 AUGUST 1998 PCZ#66

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TINY COMPO: NAME ALL THE GAMES PICTURED ABOVE (YES, EVEN BEHIND THE BLOBS). FIRST OUT OF THE HAT WITH THE MOST CORRECT TITLES WINS A MYSTERY PRIZE. FULL DETAILS PAGE 7...

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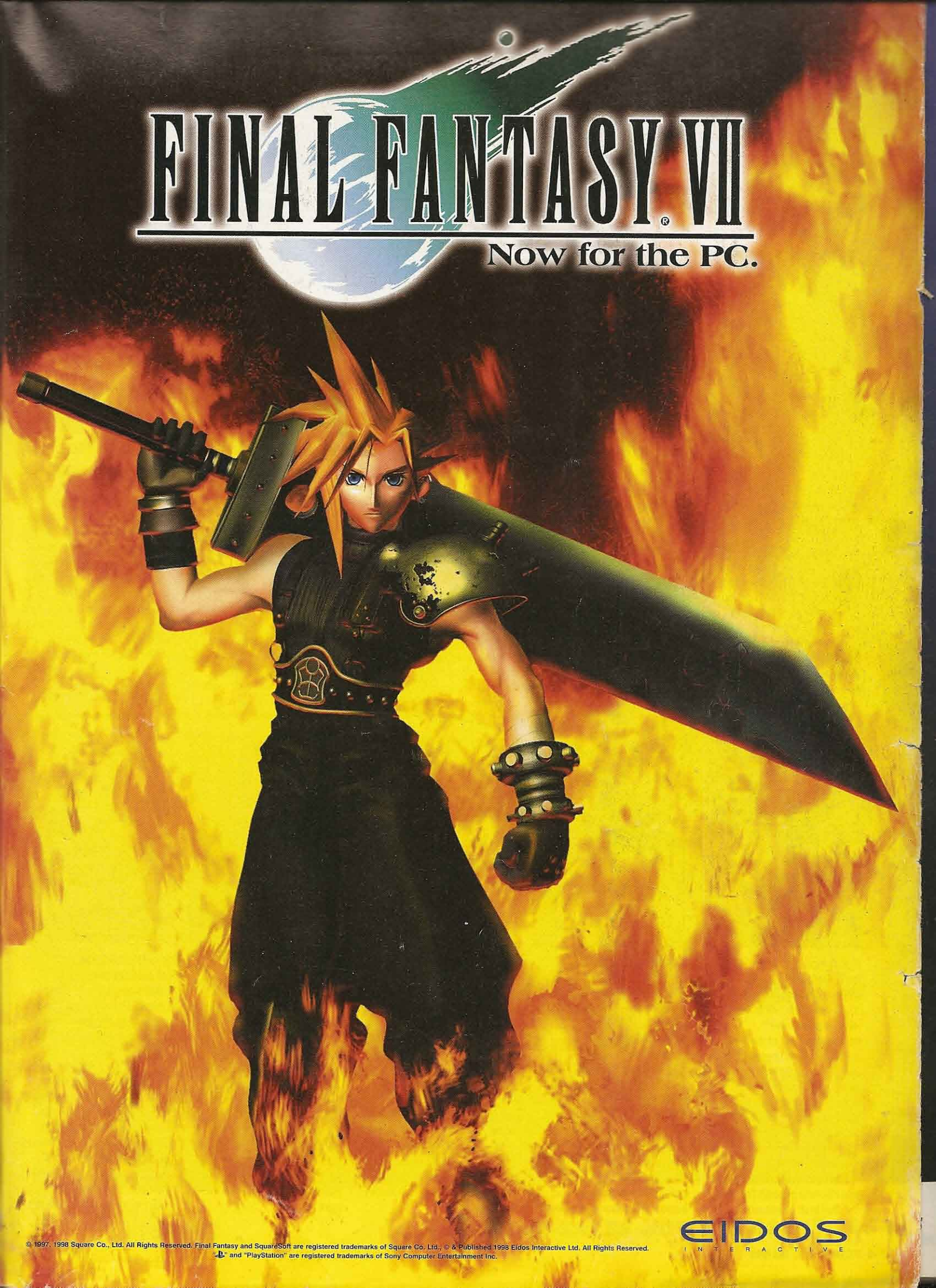
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EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

WHAT'S ON YOUR HARD DRIVE?

Take a bunch of Northerners to Jodrel Bank and you'll soon uncover the black hole of strange games they play

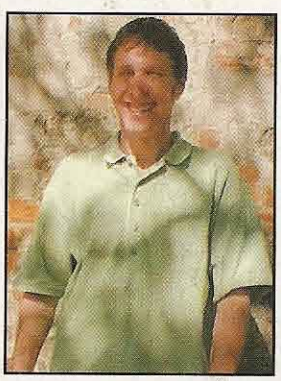
WORDS/PHOTOS Philip Fisch **LOCATION** Jodrel Bank, Cheshire



KIM VALE
36, set designer

What's on your hard drive?
"*Doom*, *Hexen* and *Micro Machines 2*."

Just driving and shooting, eh? Do you suffer from road rage?
"Not really, but I don't have a lot of time for games. Well I do really, but my girl Zoe gets a bit upset when I disappear for hours on end. I do lose all track of time though, so at least with *Micro Machines* we can both play with friends, although she will still only allow a couple of hours play at a time."



SIMON KEENE
24, astronomer

What's on your hard drive?
"*TIE Fighter*, *Discworld* and *Pax Imperia 2*."

Sci-fi and fantasy, eh? Having problems with science fact?
"I'm working on a program to help me calculate the mass of stars, but it doesn't seem able to weigh much more than a bag of sweets. Thankfully I didn't have anything to do with the programming of *X-Wing*, which is still possibly the best ever space shooter; although an Internet pal rates *TIE Fighter* much higher."



DENISE SUMPTER
25, dental nurse/technician

What's on your hard drive?
"*Dbase*, I think, and *Theme Park*."

Are you a girl who likes to play with numbers?
"Good God no. The computer is the one in the surgery and we use *Dbase* for customer records. The dentist loves computer games, but his wife won't let him play games when he gets home, so he puts his games on the office PC and tells her that he's working late! What a peculiar mistress that poor woman has to compete with! Still, I get to play them too."



GEORGE WARDILL
14, schoolboy

What's on your hard drive?
"*Tomb Raider*, *FIFA '98*, *Striker '95* and a few other footie games."

"You have an interest in football, then?"
"Ha! You could say that. I especially like *FIFA '98* at the moment. I just love the way the camera moves around the field and makes the game look more real. The commentary's good too, although it's a bit strange sometimes – like when it says 'Another great shot!' even when you're shooting for the first time!"



CRAIG KEENER
26, aircraft salesman

What's on your hard drive?
"*Championship Manager*, *F1 97*, *F-22 ADF*, *Flight Sim '98*."

You're not really interested in tactics, speed or flying, then?
"I do work with military aircraft, but I can't fly myself. I'm a technician, so I guess the nearest I'll get to flying will be with PCs or simulators. Actually, between them, *F-22* and *Flight Sim '98* could give any half-a-million-quid simulator a bit of a run for its money. If you look at it like that, £35 for a game is a bargain."



RACHAEL KELLY
24, hairdresser

What's on your hard drive?
"Loads – *F1*, *C&C*, *FIFA: Road To World Cup* and more."

Do you play a lot of games?
"Actually, I didn't used to. I bought the PC to do some writing and desktop publishing so that I could do mail-outs to salon customers. My boyfriend soon bought some games for it, but I found myself playing them more than him. Imagine his face these days when he can't get on the PC to play *FIFA* with his mate because I'm up to my neck in an F1 season!"



TODD GREEN
23, mature student

What's on your hard drive?
"*Worms II*, *Tomb Raider*, *FIFA: Road To World Cup '98*."

***Worms II* is getting a bit crusty now isn't it?**
"Never! It's pure brilliance. *Worms* was always a winner, and for one simple reason: the game is based upon several simple ideas. All the best games have a simple idea. *Worms* has a simpler message: kill or be killed. And it's fast and a mix between skill and luck. And the exploding sheep humour still gets me every time."



JONATHAN ASHLEY
25, car salesman

What's on your hard drive?
"*FIFA '97*, *PGA Golf*, *C&C*."

No new games?
"I've only just got my computer, but it came with loads of games, so why should I shell out brass when I don't need to? Anyway, all the latest games will be selling for half price just a few months after they've come out. I'll buy them then. I'm glad that cars don't lose value that fast or I'd be out of a job. I can't afford to waste money on new games."



WYNN JENKINS
36, model maker

What's on your hard drive?
"*Quake II*, *Tomb Raider*, *Diablo*."

What do you like about *Diablo*?
"Well it's not the fighting that is its best point. *Quake* is probably the best for that sort of in-your-face, heart-in-your-mouth sort of stuff. But *Diablo* has a really strong storyline. And the character animations are just so beautifully defined and detailed – it's made me start thinking of ways to push the models that I make and make them look even more realistic."

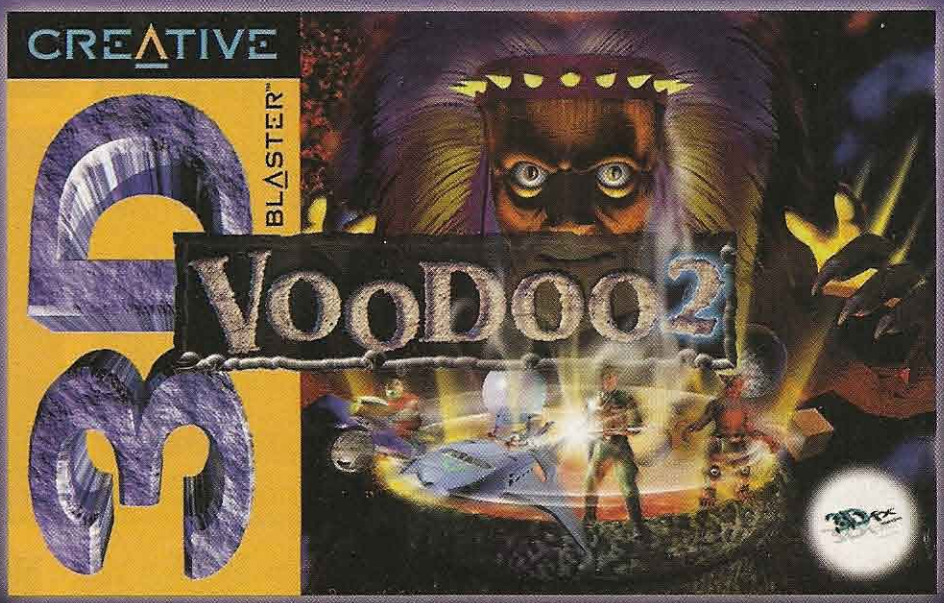


TODD ANDERSON,
23, frame restorer

What's on your hard drive?
"*Diablo*, *Championship Manager*."

Aren't they at opposite ends of the spectrum?
"Not really. *Diablo* is great to play late at night in a darkened room. It's got a great plot and is really atmospheric. You could even say it's like playing a gentle horror movie. And talking of horror, *Champ Manager* lets me let loose my ugly footie side. I just love footie, and now I can prove that I'm better than a lot of the twats who call themselves managers."

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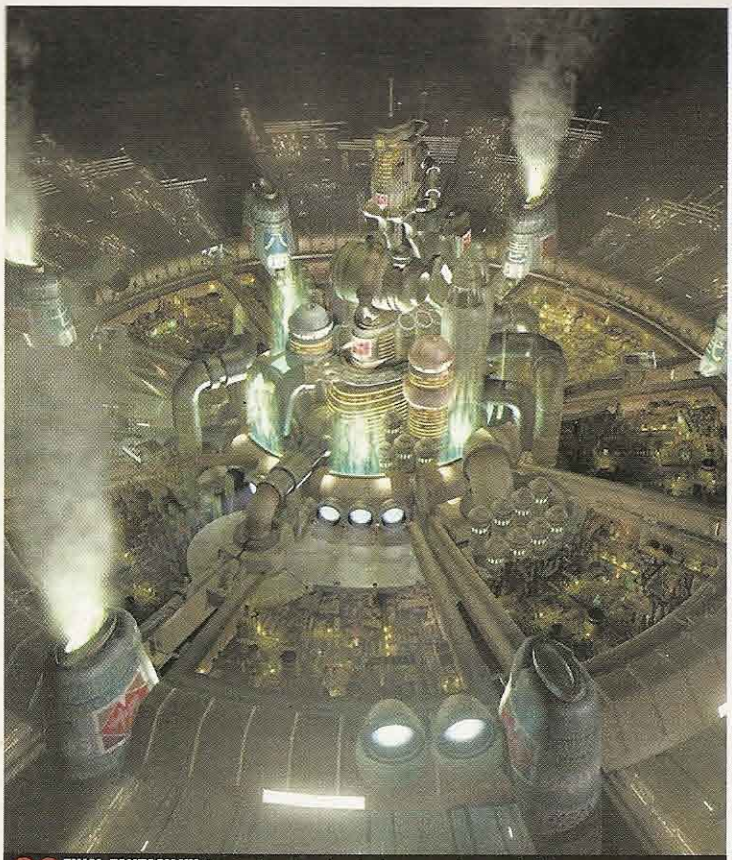
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PCreview

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92 **FINAL FANTASY VII** Square's epic role-playing game is revealed to an eager PC audience at last. And believe us: you won't be disappointed.



98 **MECHCOMMANDER** Real-time strategy with brains.



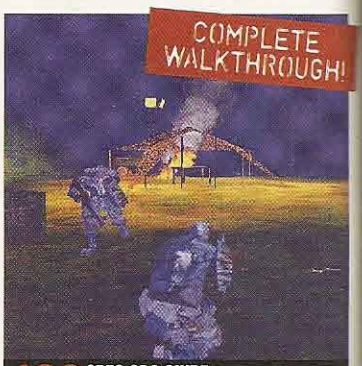
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96 **COMMANDOS** Little men in green suits play with enormous guns.



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138 **SPEC OPS GUIDE** All your *Spec Ops* queries answered.

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WIN THE TOP 20 PC GAMES
SEE THE PC ZONE CHARTS PAGE 28



ON THE CD



FULL DETAILS PAGE 160

That silvery thing on the cover is loaded with great demos, patches and helpful files guaranteed to ensure you get more out of your PC

DON'T MISS DEMOS OF...

SENSIBLE SOCCER WORLD CUP 98
FREESPACE: THE GREAT WAR
MECHCOMMANDER
MICRO MACHINES V3
F-15
FINAL FANTASY VII
COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES
NIGHTMARE CREATURES
AND MORE!

PLUS

The new Quake patch, over 1200 game tips, the latest Paint Shop Pro 5, zillions of hot screenshots from E3, over 20 new patches and... oh, just go to page 160 and see

COVER STORY 41-77 **50 MOST WANTED** In our essential guide to the PC's elite, we single out 50 games coming your way this year and beyond that you just can't afford to miss.

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Quite literally the best games news section in the universe

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Cos gaming's only the half of it



WIN! **THE COMPO NO ONE FINDS** Name all the games which have screenshots featured on this month's cover and you can win a box full of PC goodies. Send your entry on the back of a postcard (or probably something a bit bigger), addressed to: **The Compo No One Finds, *PC Zone*, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.** First entry with the most correct answers plucked out of the hat wins. The Ed's decision is final. Closing date: Monday 10 August.

WELCOME TO THE ALL-NEW PCZONE

The E3 show in Atlanta only lasted three days, but it felt like a couple of months. Well over 300 games made an appearance and while many of them were merely poor imitations of games we've seen before, there were also plenty which are set to break the mould.

We haven't droned on about the E3 show itself this issue because we know you're not interested in all that trade bollocks. What we have done is pull out the very finest new games from the show (we've left the dross for other magazines to dwell on). It's a whopping feature spanning 31 pages and it's taken us weeks to compile, but we're pleased with the results – and we hope you are, too.

Next issue we want to print *your* list of the top titles. We want to find out which games you're most interested in seeing and we intend to print the list in next issue's Bulletin pages. Send your top five most wanted games to the usual address or email us at **letters.pcz@dennis.co.uk** (use the subject heading 'My Most Wanted').

While we're on the subject of communication, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who wrote in with comments about the new-look *PC Zone*. As a result of your comments, we've made a few more changes this issue, including a better Troubleshooter section and more reviews. One of the things we've tried to achieve with our new look is to make the mag feel more grown-up and according to many of you, we've managed to achieve that aim. To check out what other readers have had to say about the issue, check out page 15 where we've rounded up a selection of your quotes.

In the meantime, bear in mind that we're always keen to hear your comments – and we do act on them. So if you've got anything to say about the latest issue then write or email me at the address below. And don't forget to let me know your five most wanted games.

All the best,
Mark Higham *(Editor-in-Chief)*

GET IN TOUCH

Let us know what you think of the new *PC Zone*. Write to: ***PC Zone*, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.** Alternatively, e-mail us at **mhigham@dennis.co.uk.** We're waiting to hear from you.

MEET THE ZONE CLAN

All *PC Zone*'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a reviewer who's a fan of the genre



Jeremy Wells

What's on your hard drive? *CM 97/98, Unreal, World Cup 98* and *Spec Ops*
Best games ever: *Championship Manager 2, Quake II* and *Gran Turismo* (PSX)
Favourite genres: Sports, driving and *Quake* clones
Most anticipated game of the year? *Championship Manager 3*



Chris Anderson

What's on your hard drive? *Curse of Monkey Island, X-COM Interceptor* and *F-22 ADF*
Best games ever: *X-COM Apocalypse, Final Fantasy VII* (PSX), *Ultima VII* and *Midwinter*
Favourite genres: RPGs, strategy and adventure
Most anticipated game of the year? *Ultima Ascension*



Paul Mallinson

What's on your hard drive? *Dark Lords Rising, Sentinel Returns, Final Fantasy VII* and *Unreal*
Best games ever: *Resident Evil 2, Super Tennis* (SNES) and *Quake II*
Favourite genres: RPGs, shoot 'em ups and... anything, really
Most anticipated game of the year? *Half-Life*



Richie Shoemaker

What's on your hard drive? *Game, Net and Match, Total Annihilation, Conflict: Freespace* and *Quake II*
Best games ever: *Elite* (BBC Micro), *Laser Squad* (Spectrum) and *Doom*
Favourite genres: Real-time strategy and 3D shoot 'em ups
Most anticipated game of the year? *Half-Life*



David McCandless

What's on your hard drive? *Sonic Foundry Acid* (www.sonicfoundry.com) and *Unreal*
Best games ever: *Ultima Underworld, Doom* (first episode) and *Resident Evil II*
Favourite genres: 3D shooters
Most anticipated game of the year? *Half-Life*



Charlie Brooker

What's on your hard drive? *Final Fantasy VII, Sentinel Returns* and *Unreal*
Best games ever: *Quake II, Puzzle Bobble* and *Tekken 3* (PSX)
Favourite genres: Action, strategy and point-and-click adventures
Most anticipated game of the year? *Grim Fandango*



Paul Presley

What's on your hard drive? *The Last Express, F/A-18 Korea* and *Frontier: First Encounter*
Best games ever: *Minder* (Spectrum), *Ultima IV* and *The Secret Of Monkey Island*
Favourite genres: RPGs, adventures and flight sims – anything that's good
Most anticipated game of the year? *Ultima Ascension*



Keith Pullin

What's on your hard drive? *Sentinel Returns, Quake II* and *Sonic Foundry Acid*
Best games ever: *Starquake, Sentinel*
Favourite genres: Strategy and sports
Most anticipated game of the year? *Championship Manager 3*



Phil Wand

What's on your hard drive? *GTA, Total Annihilation, F1GP2, Duke Nukem 3D* and hundreds of old Sinclair Spectrum games
Best games ever: *Total Annihilation* and *Doom v.1*
Favourite genres: Real-time strategy and driving
Most anticipated game of the year? *Total Annihilation 2*



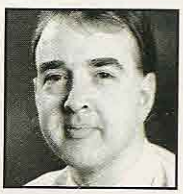
Steve Hill

What's on your hard drive? *Commandos, Sensible Soccer '98* and *Knights Merchants*
Best games ever: *Sensible World Of Soccer, ISS 64* (N64) and *Manic Miner* (Spectrum)
Favourite genres: Football, driving and 3D shoot 'em ups
Most anticipated game of the year? *FIFA 99*



Warren Chrismas

What's on your hard drive? *Blade Runner, Commandos* and *Sonic Foundry Acid* (music sequencer)
Best games ever: *Tetris* (Gameboy), *Championship Manager 2* and *ISS 64* (N64)
Favourite genres: Football and other sports titles, driving sims and real-time strategy games
Most anticipated game of the year? *Championship Manager 3*



Andrew Wright

What's on your hard drive? *M1 Tank Platoon 2, C&C: Red Alert – Aftermath, Age Of Empires* and *F-22 ADF*
Best games ever: *Dungeon Master, Civ II, Doom, Incubation* and *C&C*
Favourite genres: War games (by a neck), strategy and *Quake* clones
Most anticipated game of the year? I'll get back to you on that

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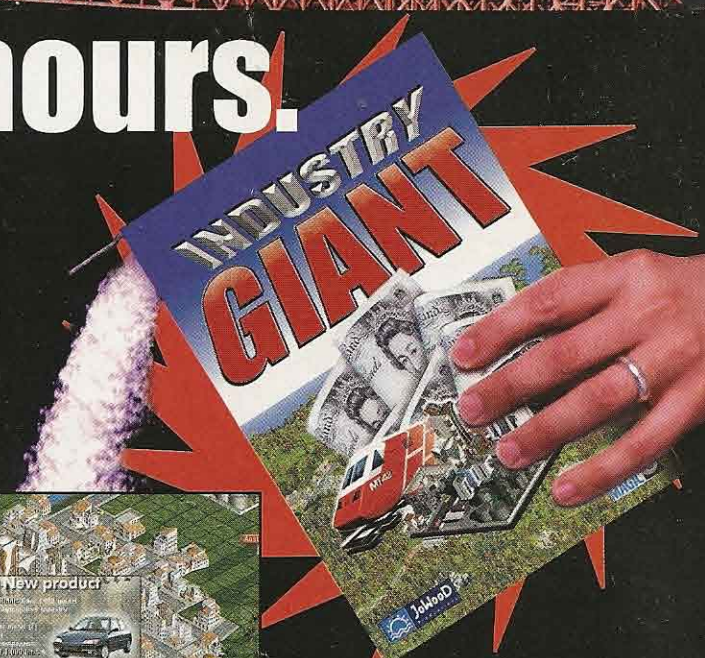
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MAILBOX



Do you love or loathe the 'new look' *Zone*? What's the best game ever? Do girls really know nowt about games? And why was *Killer Net* so crap?

ANSWERED BY Jeremy Wells

CONTACT INFO

If your letter is selected as 'Letter of the Month' we'll send you some promotional goodies, a game and maybe even some hardware!

WRITE TO Mailbox, PC Zone, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ

E-MAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk

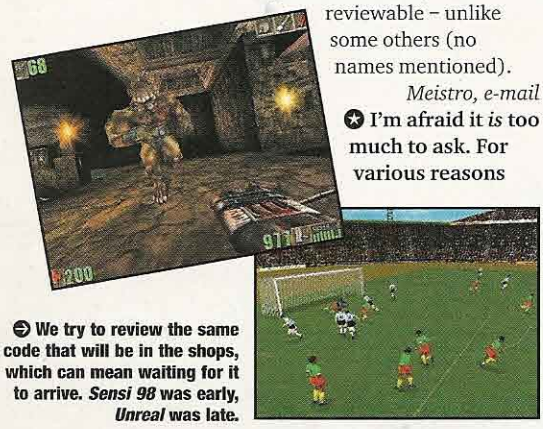
CHAT FORUM If you've got something pressing to say, check out the 'lively' chat forum on our website. Point your browser at **www.pczone.co.uk** for further info.

TOO EARLY OR TOO LATE

I've noticed that you have a habit of reviewing some games months before they appear in the shops (*Sensible Soccer 98*), and some months after (*StarCraft*, for example). Surely all publishers get reviewable copies of their games to all the PC magazines in time to allow proper reviews to appear prior to release? Or is this expecting too much from the average publisher? It's good that you don't review games before they are reviewable – unlike some others (no names mentioned).

Meistro, e-mail

I'm afraid it *is* too much to ask. For various reasons (not always made clear) publishers let different magazines have 'reviewable' code at different times. We normally get 'final' gold betas – code that's about to be mastered – to review. That way we can review it just before the game makes it into the shops. Unfortunately, sometimes the publishers hold a game's release for various reasons (marketing schedules, bad score, bugs etc) and our review comes out too early. Whenever possible we try and review exactly the same code that you'll end up buying in the shops, and often hold reviews because we don't think a game is in a reviewable state (for example: *Unreal*, *PCZ* #65, 93%) or we think it's too buggy or incomplete. Sometimes a boxed version will turn up in the post and we'll review it as soon as we can. However, when this happens it usually means it's a bit on the crap side and the publisher is trying to pull a fast one in the hope that we don't review it at all. Some games aren't even sent to us (see Hall of Shame, page 91), so we go and buy 'em and review them as soon as we can. The way we see it, we need to tell you what not to buy as well as what's good.



We try to review the same code that will be in the shops, which can mean waiting for it to arrive. *Sensi 98* was early, *Unreal* was late.

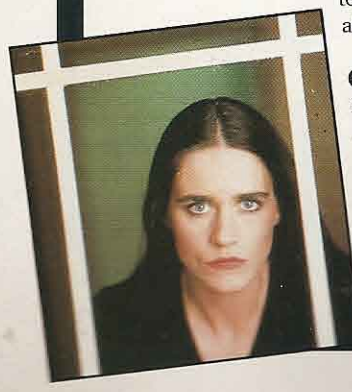
KILLER NET IS CRAP!

Why do we have to suffer such fecking crap as *Killer Net* on the TV? Are people who play computer games so fecking stupid that they don't know when a game is using a modem and deleting things from CD-ROMs! Are people really stupid enough to believe any of this crap?

What a waste of time it is to watch any programme which features computers – the producers don't bother to make it even remotely realistic. But when they're making costume dramas, they make sure every attention to historical detail is looked at. When are we going to see something on the telly that is realistic and not aimed at computer dummies?

Jimbob, Coventry

We couldn't agree more. It's things like *Killer Net* that give PC games and the Internet a bad name. The bird in it wasn't bad though, eh?



Cathy Brolly came to a grisly end in TV's *Killer Net* – so ludicrous the public demanded she be put behind bars.

GIRLS KNOW NOWT

I've noticed that all the females I know are pathetic when it comes to computer games. Ask a lad what his favourite game is and it will be something to do with people dying, sport, racing fast cars or conquering landscapes. But ask a girl what her favourite game is and it will be either *Tomb Raider* or a shite basic game like *Tetris*.

If you leave my mum and sister in a room with a computer and access to all the games in the world, they will choose *Tetris* – they play it for hours, days!

It seems to me that some females (not all) don't realise that there are other games – exciting games – that they too can play. They don't seem to understand the freedom of choice in games like *Grand Theft Auto*, and how it doesn't matter if you run over a few people – it's only a game.

"I've noticed that all the females I know are pathetic when it comes to computer games"

GEOFF, OXON

Women are more than capable of doing whatever men do, I'm sure. But some of them must have a built-in psychological reaction to immediately give up on games like *Quake II* and *Total Annihilation* because they are

LETTER OF THE MONTH

WHO NEEDS SVGA ANYWAY?

SOUND CARD WINNER!

A simple question: why do we need graphics accelerators? I mean, it was only a couple of months ago that you didn't need the latest in graphics technology to run your favourite games. In my opinion *C&C*, one of my faves, looked great when it came out, and still does today. You see, I am one of the very few sad people left in this world who do not yet have SVGA. And, yes, it sucks. Now, I know that back in the days when computers were new, graphics were an unnecessary accessory, but nowadays you can't get along without them. There are always the alternatives, like playing in DOS mode, which I had to do with *Red Alert*. But that sucks. And what about today's new games? *Worms 2* should easily be able to run on a VGA card but it doesn't, it crashes. The good thing is that there are some games out there that work perfectly well without SVGA, most notably *Dungeon Keeper* and *Total Annihilation*. They look brill and they work great, so why can't other games? I mean, those two have way better graphics than most other games out there. But the fact remains: some games just suck, because their only selling point is their graphics. I look at *Incoming* and I see my monitor explode instantaneously, because if I were to try and run the thing it would never work, even if I were to put it in the lowest 'Marioland 2' graphics resolution. Games don't need great graphics to work, so why do they get put in anyway?

Nicholas Skillicorn, e-mail

You've got a point. If games can feasibly run in VGA, developers should cater for those who don't have the high-spec machines. However, I think you're fighting a losing battle. With the advent of 3D accelerator cards and 3D games, the emphasis is increasingly on flash graphics; though that doesn't mean to say that nice-looking games aren't good games. Please accept a 3D card with our compliments.



***Dungeon Keeper* works well in VGA, but the future's 3D.**

PREMIER MANAGER 98

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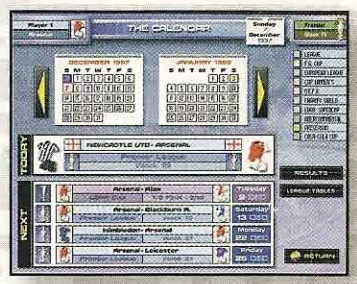
the true manager of the year

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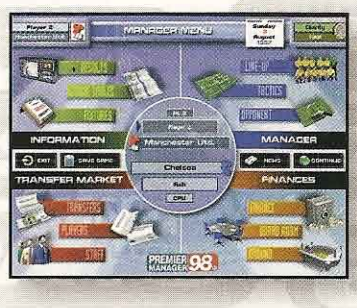
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Gran Turismo – burning rubber in the PlayStation charts.

too 'complicated'. I'm sure if they tried they could easily manage. Can someone please explain to me why on earth they do this?

Geoff, Oxon

Our 'Girls And Games' feature (*PCZ* #58) proved that, given half a chance, girls do like PC games, they just have different priorities. And what's wrong with *Tetris* and *Tomb Raider*? They're both gaming classics.

GRAN TURISMO ON PC?

Firstly, I would like to say that I really *love* reading *PC Zone* magazine. It's the best.

My friend got this really cool car racing game for his PlayStation called *Gran Turismo*. It's the wildest, coolest and most realistic of all the car games I've seen so far. I wonder if you've heard about it or played it. I don't have a PlayStation but I do have a PC. So my question is:

1. If you've ever played it, how would you rate it? I'd give it 10/10!

2. Do you have any idea if/whether the makers of *Gran Turismo* will introduce the same version of this game on the PC?

3. Can I look forward to seeing any other racing games which are as realistic as *Gran Turismo*?

GT, e-mail

We reviewed the PlayStation version last month in our new PlayStation Zone page in the news section – it scored a highly commendable 9/10.

As far as we know there are no plans for a PC version, but you can bet your last Rolo that PC developers will be clamouring to release *GT* clones as we speak. We'll keep you posted.

DON'T DIS ID

Quake II, eh? One of the best, most customisable PC games ever, and all people can do is moan when the developer tries to improve it! I'm referring of course to the patches appearing from iD. I admit that it's annoying when trying to conduct a single-player and multiplayer game from a single installation, but why not try *two* installations – one with the latest patch and one without.

Alternatively, the method I use is to create various directories within the *Quake II* directory named with the patch version and one back-up dir., then copy the files that are replaced by the patch into the back-up directory and just copy in the replaced files to their respective locations (dead quick using cut-and-paste).

The files in question are: Quake2.exe; Ref_gl.dll; Ref_soft.dll, plus Gamex86.dll in the baseq directory (although make sure this is copied back to the original baseq directory).

This makes it much easier to go in and customise the game to whichever version you want without sacrificing loads of disk space. I currently run version 3.05, 3.10, 3.13 and 3.14 on a single installation.

I hope this helps anyone frustrated with the inevitable *Quake II* patches, and well done to iD for a great game – long may your free update philosophy reign.

Mack James, Bampton, Oxon

You're right, it is a pain, but it is commendable. If only more developers had a conscience when it comes to after-sales service. And thanks for the advice. I'm sure the whingers will find it useful.



Don't moan about iD's *Quake* patches – they're brilliant.

ON BIAS...

I've been a reader of *PC Zone* for the past two years, and I always read your reviews before rushing out and buying any game. Even if I've already played the demo 1000 times and decided that I love it, I always read your review because you seem to have the same ideas about PC games as I do; but as I've recently realised, this is not always the case...

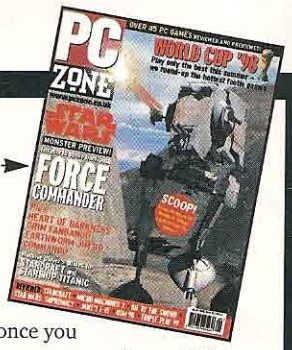
One example is a review of *Lula & The Sexy Empire* (or something). I read the review in another magazine (as I already had that month's issue of *PC Zone*) and noticed that they gave it a rating of 18%, which I think is justified – it's got poor, cartoony graphics and lacks gameplay. However, this score could easily have been different if reviewed by someone else. For example, an 18-year-old student with a conviction for drugs dealing and little concept of the idea that games promoting pornography are not popular might have scored it at something like 80%+. Then again, a 'sensible' adult pushing middle age who wears a cardigan and has a saying for every scenario would give the game little more than 3%. How does the review thing work at *Zone*?

Jamie Collinson, aka Eschaton, e-mail

We always try and give games the best possible chance when they come in for review. As a result, we wouldn't give a footie game to someone who hates football, or a flight sim to someone who gets off on real-time strategy games. More often than not, when a game comes in someone in the office will ask to review it – they're most likely a fan of the genre and want to check it out. If a game scores particularly highly, or is pretty dire, then we'll all have a play just to be on the safe side.

RIDE A COCK HORSE

Your letters about Archer Maclean (*PCZ* #64) were not only about his game, they were about Banbury



COME ON DOWN

I was reading your publication – more specifically, the Archer Maclean interview where you criticised the Banbury area – and was outraged. You portrayed Banbury as nothing more than a town with a factory and a roundabout (The Banbury Cross in the popular children's rhyme), but Banbury is so much more.

Banbury is *nice* because:

1. You can have six fingers on each hand and fit in just like a local. In fact, if you have any less you tend to be regarded as a freak.

2. It has shops like Littlewoods and Somerfield where you can go shopping.

3. As there is no local entertainment (except a two-screen cinema), the younger generation are not subjected to any negative influences, and therefore grow up as well-balanced young adults (or mindless cretins, as we call them around here).

4. The train service is so bad that we don't get many strangers round these parts.

5. There are at least four different games companies in the area, meaning that 68 per cent of the population spend most of their time indoors, therefore keeping crime low.

6. Even though it is near the centre of the country, it is not within range of a single interesting city or town, meaning that once you move to Banbury you never leave. This creates a very close-knit community, similar to the one portrayed in *The Stepford Wives*.

I hope this insight into living in Banbury has changed your perception of this Oxfordshire town, and that you will come and visit us in the future.

Mike – Head of the Banbury Tourist Board.
'Banbury: the nice place to live' – West

"I wish to complain about your recent criticism... Banbury is, in actual fact, a far more horrible and tedious place than the town you described"

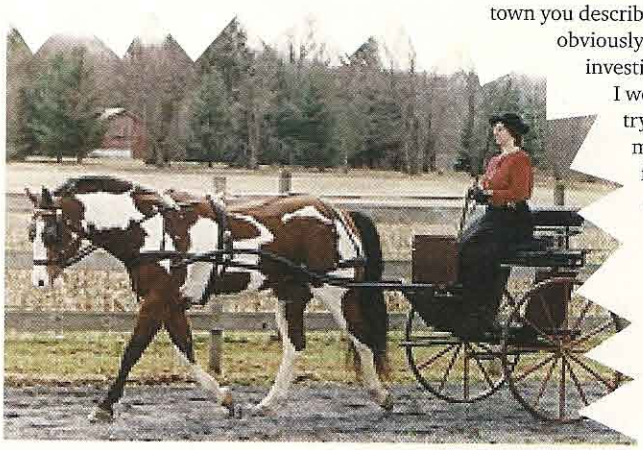
JASON BUTTERLY, E-MAIL

STAY AWAY

I wish to complain about your recent criticism of Banbury. I feel that you are misleading the public with such uninformed comment. Banbury is, in actual fact, a far more horrible and tedious place than the town you described. Your reporter was obviously too scared/wise to investigate further.

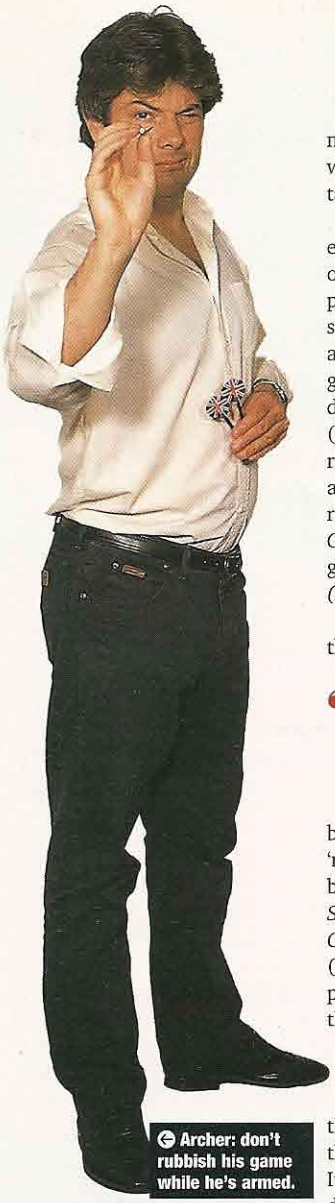
I would hope that you try to convey a little more accuracy in future, otherwise people may wander in by accident.

Jason Butterly, e-mail



According to your letters, Banbury hasn't changed much since this picture was taken. (This is one of the Stepford Wives.)

At the end of the day though, it's all pretty subjective and personal, which is why we try and use the same reviewers for certain genres. At least then you have a bit of background as to their history, their likes and dislikes, and you can hopefully get more out of the review.



Archer: don't rubbish his game while he's armed.

ARCHER'S AN ARSE!

Your Archer Maclean article (*PCZ* #64) was interesting, but I rather think you're missing the point. He admitted to being a 'detail junkie', but is that the key to a great game? Anyone who ever attempted to play two-player *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* doesn't go on about how accurate the ball physics were or how realistic the screwing back felt (leave it), but just what a complete pain in the arse the control system was. "Oh, you've finished your shot. But you only took ten minutes. And you've potted a ball, so you go again!"

Detail says that you have to chalk your cue, but what a completely pointless thing to put in a computer game – while you're at it, why not manually re-rack the balls as well? How about building the table before you can play?

There are, perhaps, other examples where a game has obviously been painstakingly put together and months seemingly spent on details and cosmetics, but where the gameplay is just not there in depth: take *Magic Carpet* (great engine, bloody repetitive), *Diablo* (lovely animation, bloody... er... repetitive), the *Wing Commander* Series. I could go on but I'm boring you *(No, really? – Ed)*.

Contrast these games with those whose presentation is best described as 'rudimentary' but with bucketloads of gameplay: *Sensible Soccer, Civilization, Championship Manager 2* (that should get this published) *(Yep – Ed)*. I know there are those that manage both, but it's the gameplay element that counts. I mean, who cares if there's a virtual ref who rolls the snooker ball into place? It's the kind of detail that you don't even notice after ten minutes, because it does sod all for the game.

Rob Meeks, e-mail

Over to you, Archer...

> **"Who cares if there's a virtual ref who rolls the snooker ball into place? It does sod all for the game"**
> ROB MEEKS

WE WILL, WE WILL... BORE YOU!

How *dare* you refer to Queen as "bloated, aging rock stars" (page 143, issue 64)? Queen, as we all know, were the greatest group *ever* to grace the face of this planet, and I'm sure we're all aware just how thin and beautiful all four of them were.

Take Freddie Mercury, for example. Bloated? Never! Aging? What's that got to do with anything? Brian May – bloated? Snigger, snigger, snigger. Is he hell. Roger Taylor – bloated? Methinks you are wearing glasses with oddly shaped lenses while viewing these people! John Deacon – bloated? Indeed, most bass guitarists are, but not this one. He goes against the biggest rule written in the rules of music: "If thine group has a bass guitarist, said bass guitarist must weigh at least 24 stone, and have the circumference of a fully inflated meteorological balloon. For if thine bass guitarist does not and is not, he is false."

In short, you have obviously got Queen confused with some cack group like Oasis or the Fugees. As Queen would say: "That critter was a bad guy, I had to make him pay."

Ian Fishwick, e-mail



As far as we're concerned, they'll all fat-bottomed girls. Their music is banned in the office and always will be. And so are the Fugees.

What a pity – Queen's rider full of pies is just out of shot.

MAKE IT CHEAPER!

Just a thought, but you should make *PC Zone* cheaper (if you can). Since it's five quid anyway, you have enough money kicking around to dish out 50 quid to anyone who writes in with a question; and there are 54 pages of adverts in your typically 154-page magazine.

Finally, please, please, please can you stop doing those fold-out adverts, they really get me annoyed. They always fall open at you when you turn the page, then you have to spend half an hour trying to fold them back.

Chris Seaton, e-mail

You must have been reading our minds. Fold-out adverts are designed to get your attention – and they obviously work.

WHAT'S THE BEST GAME EVER?

I was thinking, why don't you do a Best Game Ever award in the reviews somewhere? The game could keep the award until a better one comes along. Just think of the kudos this would earn for the game – publishers would be falling over themselves to kiss your butts!

Glad to see you have more hardware reviews now, it's a confusing world out there.

Mathew Want, e-mail

It's a nice idea, but it wouldn't really work as everyone likes different types of games. Chris's best game ever would be *X-COM Apocalypse*, Richie's would be *Quake II*, as would Mallo's, and mine would be *Championship Manager 2*. That's why we have the Top 100 split into genres – if we didn't we'd spend so much time arguing we'd never finish the mag. To find out which forthcoming games you should be saving up for, turn to page 41.



Sorry Mathew, a 'Best Game Ever' award would cause too many fights at the *Zone* HQ. Here's Chris's fave of all time, *X-COM Apocalypse*.

NEW LOOK

Here's what you think of the new-look *PC Zone*



...The 'We Say' minimum specs box in the reviews: an excellent touch. The PlayStation section: why the hell not? It can't be bad to keep an eye on what's happening elsewhere, especially as PSX titles often end up in PC form sooner or later...

Stig, e-mail

...I've only recently been buying your mag and was impressed by the interesting and varied content which rapidly matched (and has now surpassed) your competition, which I've always held in high regard. I couldn't believe that such a magazine, crammed full of *really* interesting bits and bobs (plus a bloody fab CD), can be sold so cheap. Knock me down!...

Guy Chapman

...What a change! Pretty much the same without most of the swearing that made it really stand out from the rest. And only *one* Charlie Brooker cartoon. This guy is Cartoon God!...

Geb, e-mail

...It's about the same as all the other UK-based mags. Ready to make a fast buck by publishing text littered with swear words and CDs that don't deliver...

Anthony Harratt

...I'm gobsmacked. It's everything I want from a magazine. The new patches page is a welcome addition, as are the extra pages. Lowering your price may get you more readers and subscriptions, but I'm happy to pay £5 – it gives me all the info I need. You've hit the nail on the head. Cheers.

Dave Cook

...It's utterly brilliant. Every page is absolutely crammed full of shitloads of cool stuff. I reckon I'll still be reading this issue this time next month...

Andrew Kimberley

...The magazine has kept me coming back all weekend for another read. I rarely kiss ass but I think your mag deserves recognition for such a fine job...

Saul Ross

DUNE

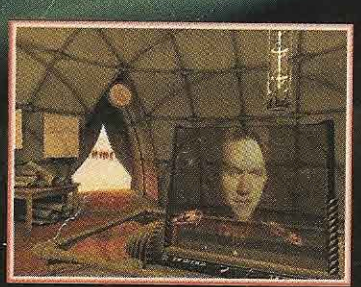
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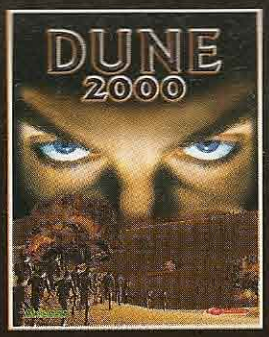
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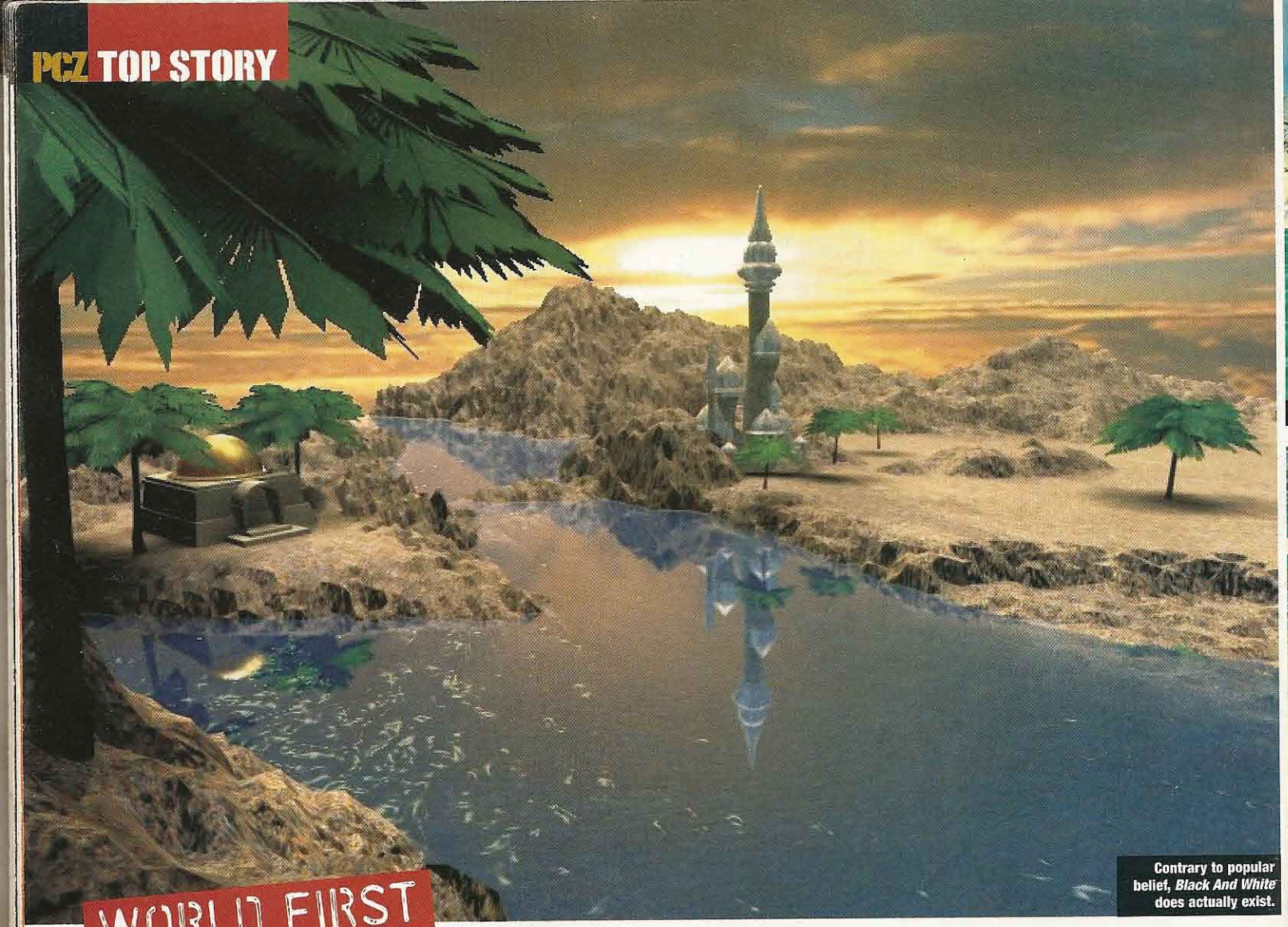
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PC CD-ROM

Remastered for the new millennium

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Contrary to popular belief, *Black And White* does actually exist.

WORLD FIRST

Black And White a

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Electronic Arts
PUBLISHER Lionhead
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Spring '99

IN SUMMARY

Real-time strategy married with arcade action, held together by an innovative game design that responds to the player's actions to an unprecedented degree. Almost like a blend of every title Molyneux and co have ever worked on, and then some.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU

The team's previous record speaks for itself. If Molyneux has his way: "*Black And White* will be the best f**king PC game in history." The team seem determined to go out of their way to make this prediction ring true.

POTENTIAL PITFALLS

Some critics claim Molyneux's previous titles for Bullfrog were too repetitive. This looks unlikely considering the amount of stuff happening in *Black And White*, but only time will tell.

Lionhead raise the curtain at last on their long-term labour of love, and *PC Zone* is there to gape at it

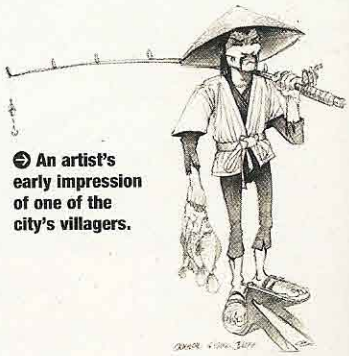
REPORT Charlie Brooker

Peter Molyneux introduces his current work-in-progress in the manner of a nervous striptease artist. "Promise you won't laugh," he pleads, half-joking. "Don't look at it and say 'is that all there is?' or I'll cry."

Why the anxiety? Because at present, *Black And White* is a long, *long* way from completion. Indeed, on the day *PC Zone* shimmered angelically through the doors at Lionhead HQ, the 3D engine was undergoing a facelift, so the working version on display looked a little like a sequence from the movie *Tron*, consisting largely of old-skool untextured wireframe graphics. And it kept crashing.

If this was any other software developer, you'd wonder what they were playing at. You'd make polite noises and find an excuse to leave – or, if you're a bit mad, fly into a rage and start overturning tables. But Molyneux and his team at Lionhead aren't just any old bunch of chancers. Many of them are ex-Bullfrog staff who in the past have worked alongside Peter on landmark games such as *Populous*, *Syndicate* (*PCZ* #17, 92%), *Theme Hospital* (*PCZ* #49, 91%), and most recently *Dungeon Keeper* (*PCZ* #53, 96%), each title a work of idiosyncratic genius.

If you've been following The Lionhead Diaries (see p168) we've been running for the last eight months, you'll have heard talk of



An artist's early impression of one of the city's villagers.

Black And White. If you haven't, we're going to come round and hammer you. Either way, you still won't have the faintest idea what the game's actually *about*. Until now.

In essence, it's a real-time strategy game, although, like *Dungeon Keeper*, it's also a whole lot more than that. Initially, you could be forgiven for thinking it's similar to *Populous*... except it isn't. Here's the deal.



Lionhead's land of little people already looks very promising.

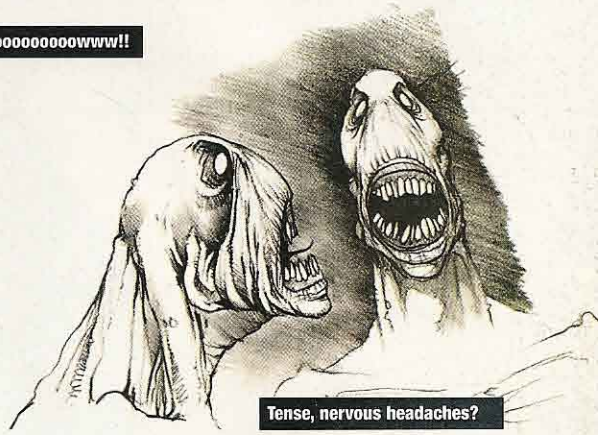


Take control of gigantic creatures and tread all over villages that piss you off.



Get the villagers on your side and you're on to a winner.





Tense, nervous headaches?

nd in living colour

There's an island. A beautiful tropical island populated by peaceful tribes and benign creatures. Everybody's happy. It's *The Brady Bunch Go Mediterranean*. It's a Utopian paradise.

And then you show up. You're a sorcerer, an unseen god-like entity who hovers above the island and controls a 'base' down below. Being a sorcerer, you can perform tricks that would make David Copperfield look like... well, a hideous, talentless wanker. But these magical powers are dependent on the number of followers you have on the island.

There are two time-honoured means of persuading people: being nice or being nasty. It's all about yin and yang: hence the title *Black And White* (although there are plenty of grey shades inbetween). The method you choose is up to you – but there's no picking sides. The engine itself will study your actions and decide whether they're intrinsically good or evil, then alter the entire game mechanics accordingly.

The graphics, the spells, the difficulty level and the options available to you are all dictated by your style of play. It's intended to be a truly reactive game which will tailor *itself* to each individual player – something no one's managed to create as yet. If Lionhead pull it off, it's going to piss over everything else we've so far experienced.

"A beautiful tropical island populated by peaceful tribes and benign creatures. Everybody's happy. It's *The Brady Bunch Go Mediterranean*. It's a Utopian paradise"

Those are the basics, but there's a hell of a lot more than that – far more than we have space to mention here. Just another highlight, then: the game lets you breed creatures, *Tamagotchi* style, until they reach Godzilla proportions. They can be trained to do more or less anything – such as eating your opponent's followers rather than your own. And you can also 'possess' them and stomp around in a first-person 3D view, creating King Kong-style havoc and fighting with other gargantuan beasts.

You may not be excited yet, but you should be. Rest assured we'll be tracking this one very closely and keeping you up to date with the latest developments. It's early days yet, but one thing's for sure: *Black And White* will either prove a heroic failure or be Game of the Year 1999. Success or failure. Good or bad. Hmm... there's that yin and yang thing again. PZ



Eeeek!



The giant himself: Kabuto. He's as tall as ten houses and as wide as a bus. One swing of his arm can destroy an entire army.

Big things on the ho

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Planet Moon Studios
PUBLISHER Interplay
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Spring '99

IN SUMMARY

Giants already looks to be an interesting and original take on the action/strategy genre, with an intriguing mix of technology and mysticism focused around a hard-core blasting edge.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

Over 40 levels of action, plus that wondrous graphical splendour that we were talking about earlier. *Giants* will almost certainly be one to show off to your mates.

POTENTIAL PITFALLS

The finer details of gameplay are, at present, still a little vague. These are early days though, so there's plenty of time for playtesting.

Planet Moon unveil their first game for Interplay: a mix of action and strategy, all wrapped in a deliciously coloured 3D-accelerated coating

REPORT Paul Mallinson



Now on its second formal working title, this new 3D actioneer from Planet Moon Studios is indeed on target to do exactly what it says on the tin – to be *gigantic*. Or full of giants. One of the two.

Noted for their previous work on Shiny Entertainment's *MDK*, Planet Moon founders Bob Stevenson and Nick Bruty chose *Giants* as their first full-on development project because it allowed them to let their imaginations run wild with the story and game design. Strangely abstract in feel, but with feet firmly in the shoot 'em up camp, *Giants* is being pitched as a multiplayer combat game drawing elements from both the action and strategy genres.

The game takes place on a massive fragment of a shattered planet consisting of over 40 separate islands. From the outside, this archipelago of floating masonry appears serenely beautiful – waterfalls paint rainbows over brightly coloured flora, with pools of water tempting the congregation of local fauna. On the inside, however, things are slightly different. Especially when *you* arrive.

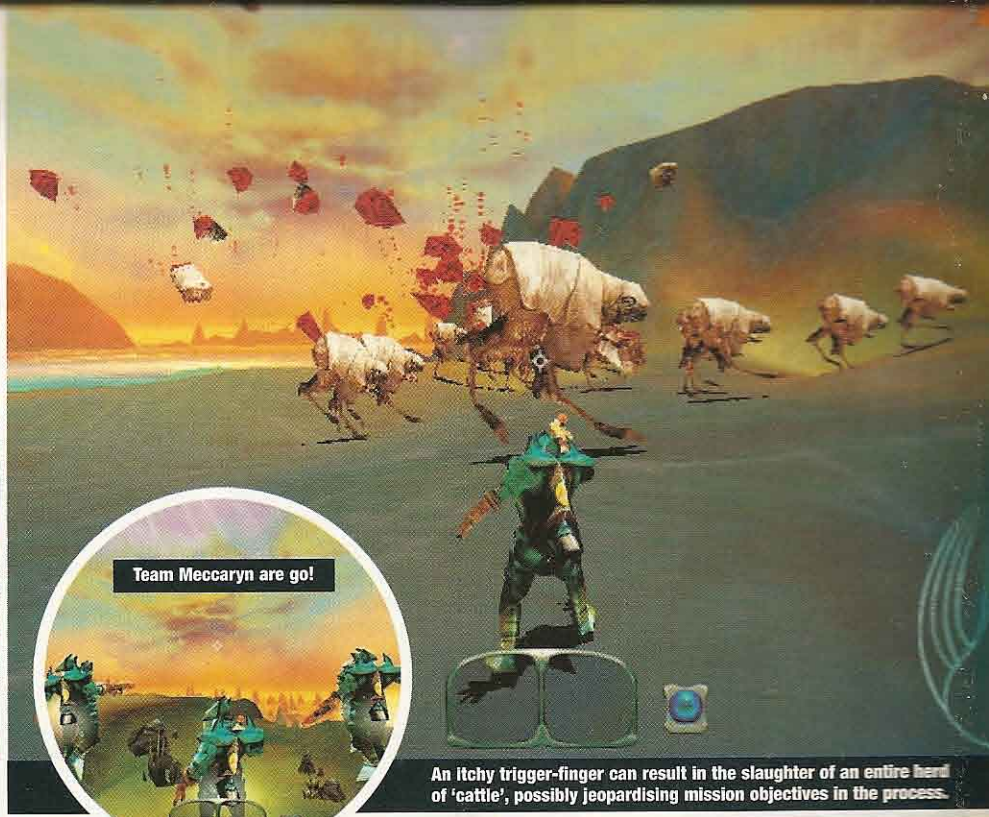
Assuming the role of one of three different characters – Sea Reapers, Meccaryn or the giant Kabuto – your mission is to annihilate the opposition and take control of the entire planet, piece by piece. Your choice of character determines view, size, number of characters and style of play. For example, as Kabuto you move very slowly, but you can take out an entire squad of Meccaryn with one fell swoop; as a Sea Reaper you can summon devastating elemental effects (such as an impressive



Nips out for the lads! The female Sea Reaper is a fine and full-bodied creature, as this unretouched screenshot shows.



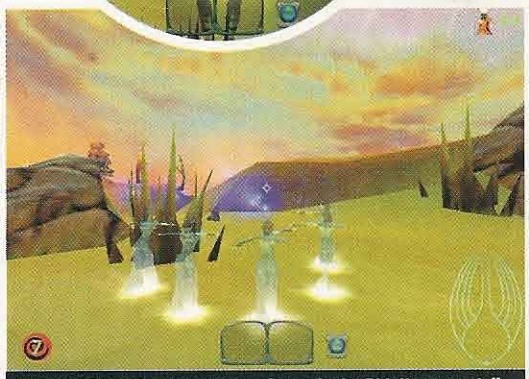
This protruding arm belongs to a member of the high-tech Meccaryn race, which have access to an arsenal of weaponry.



An itchy trigger-finger can result in the slaughter of an entire herd of 'cattle', possibly jeopardising mission objectives in the process.



Sea Reapers are capable of summoning the elements to do their destroying for them. They wield a mean bow and arrow, too.



A group of Sea Reapers prepare for a picnic. Didn't anyone tell them that Giants ain't no stroll in the park?



Here, Kabuto is either having a bit of a sit down or he's squeezing out polygonal cigars...

rizon from Interplay

tornado) and float on water; as one of the Meccaryn you will have access to a startling array of destructive weaponry and the advantages of space travel.

In other words, it will be "a three-way battle between the forces of magic, technology and brute savagery" – as the exuberant press release puts it. This three-way battle is all-important in the great scheme of things as it helps play off one opponent against the other. In essence, it's every man for himself, but alliances can be sought – until it's time for the decider. In *Giants* there will be no drawn matches.

The designers at Planet Moon are also set to include a fourth race of creature whose resources can be tapped for nourishment when necessary. These 'cattle' can be used as bait (apparently Kabuto himself is partial to a bite to eat now and then), as cover (interesting), or target practice (downright sick). Whatever their role in the finished game, you can be sure that they will come off worst in a raging gunfight.

A switchable first/third-person floating camera that allows a changing perspective to enhance various styles of play is currently being tested out by the team, but is unlikely to change. A great deal of the game is still at the drawing-board stage, but from what we've seen it's already looking like it going to be big. Hrrr hrrr. *Giants* – y'know, big...? Oh, forget it.



Shut your mouth, there's a bus coming.

BULLETIN

GAMING LANDSLIDE

REPORT Paul Mallinson, News Ed.



Firstly (before I dip into 'rant mode') a big thankyou to everyone for their feedback on the last issue. This month we have worked extremely hard to iron out any bugs that resulted from the sheer volume of changes made to the mag (apologies to T*HQ for the *Red Jack* mishap), and I think you'll agree that we've now got it down to a tee.

Once again the impending avalanche of game releases in September and November dictate a very busy time for the *PC Zone* news minions this month – not only filling these hallowed news pages with fabulous stories of gaming ecstacy, but also prompting our gigantic preview feature starting on page 41. So if you thought last month's *PC Zone* was crammed to the gills with information, a gander through this issue might impress you even more.

Look through this month's Bulletin: *Quake Arena* – what a story. Will the *Quake* series ever be the same again? Is 'bot' deathmatching the way ahead for lonely game geeks, or are we taking the whole thing far too seriously – maybe we should just let the guys at iD get on with it?

A sequel to the underrated *Myth* is just what I want to hear about, especially when I think back to all the fun I had with the original. And I want to tell you lot about it because if you play the game and agree that it has been worth the time and effort, it makes me feel all warm inside. No, really.

I was lucky enough to play *Urban Chaos* at the recent Electronic Entertainment Expo (E^3 – one word you will no doubt grow to hate come the end of this particular month) and I'm desperate to tell you more about it. In fact there are loads of games in here that I want to tell you about. That's why I'm here. So stop reading this and get on with the rest of the magazine.

TECH HEAD

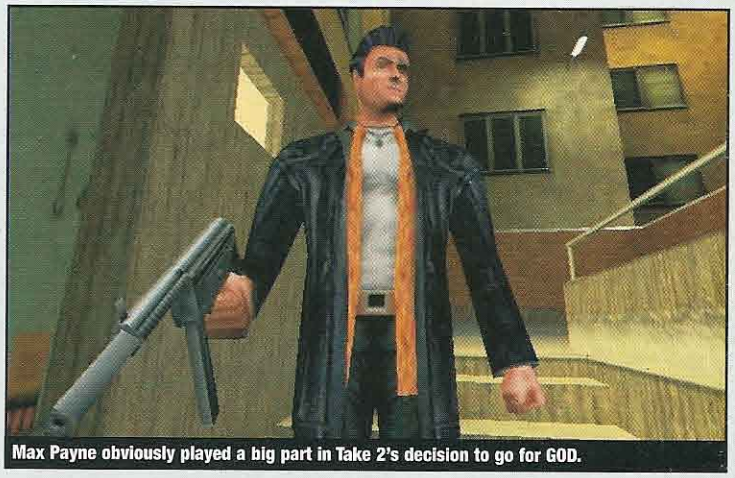
Sega's new console and how it could reshape the face of PC gaming forever

P.27

THE PCZONE CHARTS

Win the Top 20 games

P.28



Max Payne obviously played a big part in Take 2's decision to go for GOD.

GOD MOVES IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS

Among the games in the pipeline from new US publishers Gathering of Developers are *Heavy Metal*, *Railroad Tycoon II* and the brilliant-looking *Max Payne*, a third-person viewed, adventure with guns and attitude, set in New York. But first up, later this year, will be *Fly!*, a Net-ready flight sim with a global flight area, true satellite terrain imagery, interactive air traffic control and GPS navigation. After that comes *Nocturne*, in which you play a 19th century supernatural investigator doing for ghosts, vampires, zombies and werewolves what the Men In Black do for aliens.



Quake Arena will now be a multiplayer-only title.

QUAKE III RENAMED

Quake III is dead. Long live *Quake Arena*. iD Software have announced they are changing both the nature and name of the eagerly awaited action sequel. Gone are any major single-player elements, and in comes a more focused, more dedicated deathmatch and multiplayer game.

iD supremo John Carmack knows this is a risk. "We think [*Quake Arena*] can still be made an enjoyable game," he says, "but it is a gamble. There are many wonderful gaming experiences in single-player, but we are choosing to leave them behind to make significant advances in the multiplayer experience."

iD CEO Todd Hollenshead is keen to point out that this doesn't mean the solo gamer is being discounted though. "We are *not* eliminating the single-player portion of the game, and the game will *not* be online-only," he claims. "The single-player aspect will be a deathmatch-style simulation against characters with advanced, human-like AI. The single-player progression will be tournament ladder-style."

More updates as and we get them.

CITIES
This month: Hemel Hampstead comes under the spotlight
P.31

PLAYSTATION ZONE
Hot games about to hit the PC
P.33

HOTLINE
Check out what's coming up
P.36

? By the end of 1998 over 77 million PCs will be 3D hardware enabled

Why the E³ Expo was a roaring success

The E³ show in Atlanta is where it all happens – and we were there to bring you the big picture

REPORT Charlie Brooker

Atlanta, Georgia: home of the Braves. The Atlanta Braves, that is. It's also home to CNN, Coca-Cola, the 1996 Olympics and a crime rate of apocalyptic proportions. For the last two years it's also been home to the E3 show too.

Its full title, of course, is the Electronic Entertainment Expo. The catchy nickname is derived from the fact that it's got three Es in it, like a naïve pill-popping teenager on a weekend binge. In fact that's an excellent analogy, since in common with our imaginary drugged-up brat, the show is noisy, hyperactive and incredibly eager to please. Anyway, it's all about computer games. It's where the developers of the world come to lay out their wares and try to impress one another (and us) with their latest range of "products". It's where contacts are made and deals are struck, where trends can be identified and surprise announcements made. And everywhere you look there's a screen with unfamiliar, exotic visuals exploding across it. You've never seen so many new games in one place at the same time. You'd love it. Pity they won't let you in. Thing is, you see, the E³ show is strictly trade-only. Since for three days it is effectively the largest arcade in the world (the majority of the games are on display in a playable form), the public *has* to be kept at bay or the industry wouldn't be able to move for pus-faced adolescents thrashing themselves silly over *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. So unless you're part of the industry, you can't go. But we can. And we did. Don't feel left out though, because we're going to take up at least half the magazine going over the very *best* the show had to offer on the PC.

Our games preview feature starts on page 41.


Atlanta played host to E³ for the second time in succession.


E³, the biggest games event of the year.


Mallo grabs Lara while he can.

RONALDO TO PLAY FOR INFOGRAMES

Buck-toothed bald blokes everywhere gave small guttural cries of hope recently when it was announced by top computer games company Infogrames that they'd signed one of their own on a gazillion-dollar games contract. Unfortunately their slightly oversized, furry-ventricled hearts then sank in their almost feminine-breasted chests when they realised the buck-toothed bald bloke in question was actually Ronaldo Luis Nazário de Lima, Brazilian footballer of world renown who averages almost a goal a game wherever he goes. Ronaldo himself was quoted as saying: "I am thrilled to join the Infogrames team. The chance to play a key role in the design of an interactive product for kids has been a personal goal and represents an exciting challenge." But nobody believed him, especially as they knew he doesn't speak word of English and would probably rather win the World Cup and wear silver boots. They did, however, surmise that a Ronaldo-labelled football game was in the offing.


Ronaldo joins Infogrames.

EXTRA KETCHUP FOR MYTH II

Post-mortem fans will be pleased to hear that Bungie are all set to release *Myth II: Soulblighter* in the autumn. The new game includes multiple attack moves, more internal organs, twice as many animation frames, a brand-new colour lighting model, animated 3D structures (such as drawbridges, gates and windmills), and fully flammable scenery. As with *Myth: The Fallen Lords*, severed heads and bouncing torsos take the lead role. *Soulblighter* also includes a variety of ambient life – chickens, ducks, squirrels and the like – which all go pop when made to eat dynamite. *Myth II* addresses its predecessor's slightly limited gameplay with new indoor environments – you can now capture buildings and storm castles. The AI and game controls have been refined, and additional units, spells, multiplayer maps and Net games will be included.



Myth II's indoor environments are a change from the original's 'samey' landscapes.

BLUFFERS Guide to...

THE WORLD WIDE WEB

What is it?
A system enabling anyone with Internet access and suitable software to view cross-referenced documents that contain a variety of text, images, video and sounds.

Who created it?
The WWW was developed in 1989 by English computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee, to help physicists at the European Organisation for Nuclear Research in Switzerland share info. The system went active in 1991, and by the end of '96 most Net traffic was related to it.

What is it made of?
Web pages are created using Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), and each one is addressed with a Unique Resource Locator (URL). Groups of pages are referred to as a website. When you visit a page, your browser connects to the server identified in the URL via Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) and requests files. Browsers can interface with applications, so you can send and receive live info held on the remote machine.

You can find more info at www.w3c.org

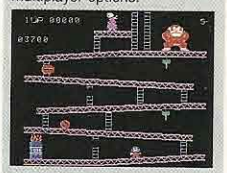
SHORTS

A DECADE OF WWF

T*HQ, Inc and JAKKS Pacific have signed a ten-year licensing agreement with Titan Sports to produce a brace of *WWF* titles. Before you laugh, World Wrestling Federation programmes top the US ratings charts – ahead of the likes of *South Park* – and T*HQ won no fewer than *five* awards for their wrestling titles at this year's E³. Coo.

WORMSTERS ANNOUNCE SGP

Team 17's *SGP* is a goofy racing game in the same mould as the successful *Micro Machines* series. Players bump and screech miniature cars around loops, ramps, corkscrews and various other improbable obstacles. Race winners gain cash which they can use to improve their pride and joy. The game features 3Dfx support, innumerable tracks and the usual multiplayer options.



MEAN PINBALL

Unlike the current bevy of pinball games, *Microsoft Pinball Arcade*, out this autumn, bases itself on real-life tables dating from 1932 to the present day. Of the seven tables, Humpty Dumpty was the first to have flippers, and Haunted House was the first triple-decker table. Other tables include Spirit of '76 and Cue Ball Wizard.



UNSEEN QUAKE II

An unofficial expansion pack for *Quake II*, called *Unseen*, has been revealed by Tequila Software. Distributed by One Stop in September, it will include a ludicrous 13 new weapons, 15 new deathmatch levels, 13 new single-player ones, 12 new enemies (including four new bosses) and a host of other additions, including gut-wrenching blood-and-gore physics.

TIDES OF WAR

Coming your way from GT Interactive this September is a new top-down strategy/resource management boat game called *Tides Of War*. It features crew management, press-ganging, combat, pillaging, piracy, sailors and torsos awash with rum.

Total freedom in Urban Chaos



A new action adventure to revolutionise the concept of gaming?

REPORT Paul Mallinson

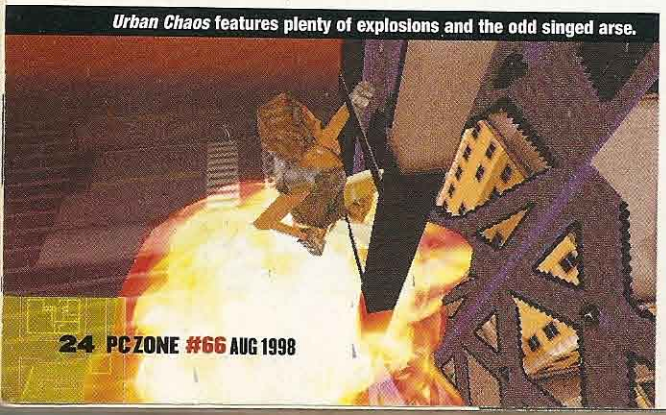
After months of silence, Mucky Foot Productions, a UK-based development team comprised of ex-Bullfrog coders, have at last unveiled screenshots and information about their forthcoming action adventure *Urban Chaos*.

Set in a dank, decaying city of the future, *Urban Chaos* is set to push back the realism borders in the gaming arena. Every object has been carefully constructed from 3D meshes rendered in real-time with full coloured lighting. You have the freedom to explore every area of the city, from buildings to rooftops, subways and sewers. You can also catch a ride on the subway, commandeer a motorcycle and speed down the city streets, or launch yourself off the top of buildings on a hang-glider.

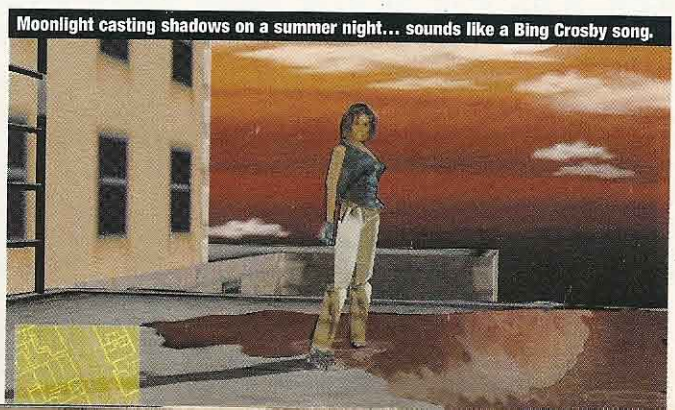
Urban Chaos utilises a 3D engine that includes volumetric fog, true 'wall-hugging' shadows and 'atomic matter simulation', which enables complete interaction with the scenery (including its destruction).

Having played an early demo, we reckon that publishers Eidos have a sure-fire hit on their hands. More for you next issue – on sale Thursday 6 August.

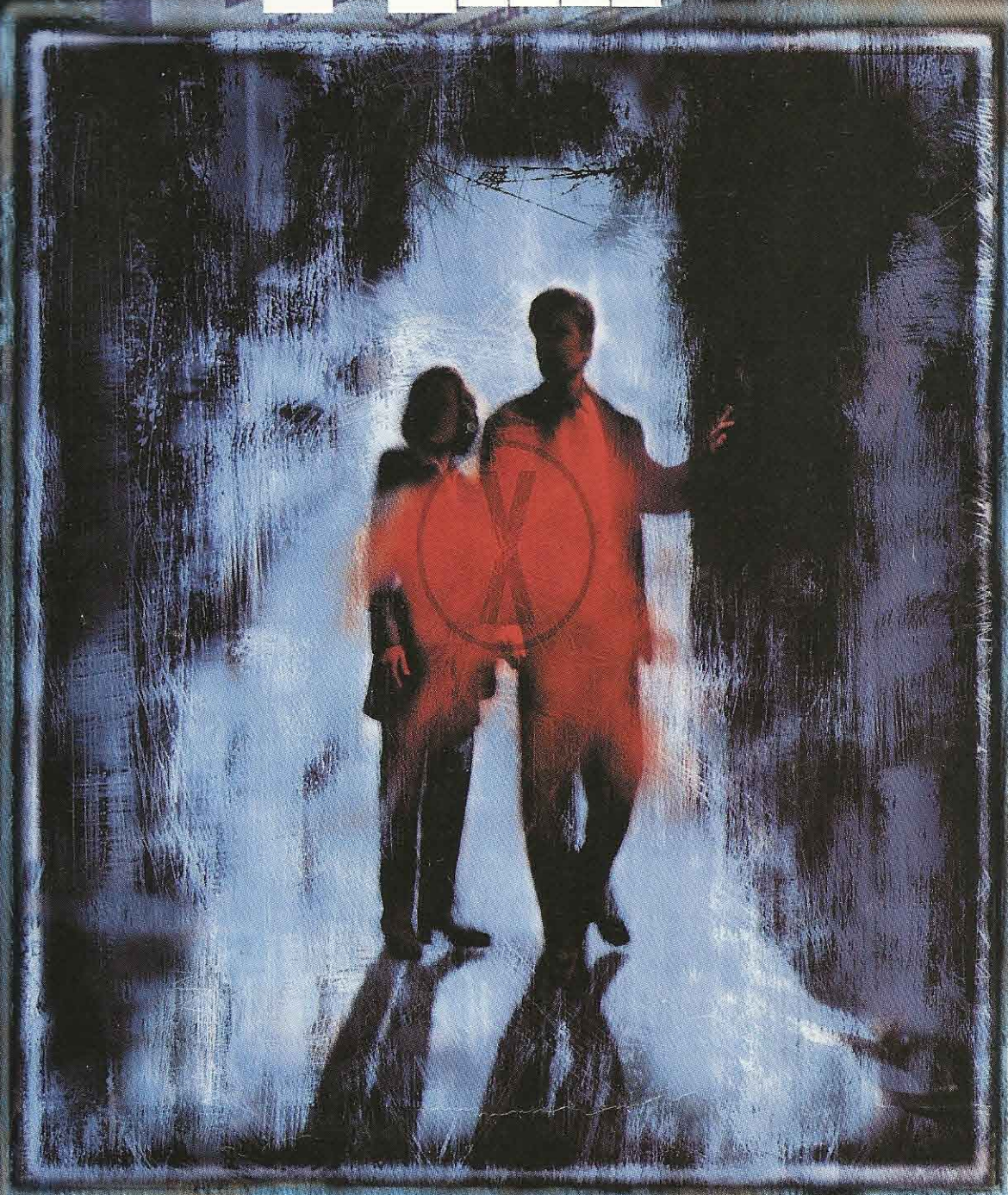
Urban Chaos features plenty of explosions and the odd singed arse.



Moonlight casting shadows on a summer night... sounds like a Bing Crosby song.



Enter The World Of The X Files™



THE X FILES™ GAME

Enter a world where every shadow conceals danger. And every case is shrouded in secrecy. As field agent Craig Willmore you'll accompany Mulder and Scully, exploring multiple paths and story lines, on the way to solving this complex mystery. All the while staying one step ahead of the FBI.

But remember, the truth isn't out there any more - it's in here.

Out July on PC CDROM/MAC CDROM







FOX INTERACTIVE™

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REFLECTIONS LET OFF STEAM



Early conceptuals give some indication of the kind of place you're gonna find yourself in.

Exploring a nightmarish alternative future in a world dominated by dark mutant technology and oppressive regimes, the forthcoming *Steam*, from Newcastle-based company Reflections, certainly looks like being an adventure game with a difference. Drawing influences from games such as *Resident Evil 2*, *Alone In The Dark* and *Tomb Raider*, along with a visual style that doffs its cap in the direction of films such as *The City Of Lost Children* and *Brazil*, *Steam* is lined up to be an intriguing 3D adventure utilising a 3Dfx-only engine. Everything from the characters and the way they speak, to the backgrounds and the cut-scenes, will be rendered in real-time 3D. How much action there'll be and story specifics are still being kept under wraps, but we hope to have more info for you next issue, out Thursday 6th August.



Looking pretty good in Voodoo2, innit?

"IF I HAD £150"

150 quid can buy a lot of fun in the wild and wacky world of computer gaming. Here's our alternative guide for those who like to play the field



A new wave of skin-tight kinkiness is becoming ever more apparent in the games that we play. Take, for example, Steve Jackson's latest risqué altercation with the hack-and-slash fighting genre, *Deathtrap Dungeon*, a saucy old game with lead characters that carry huge weapons and have next to nothing on. In fact, if Vivienne Westwood saw the clobber the *DD* crew were wearing, even she'd blush and have to turn away. But don't be a prude, *ma-an*, play these games as nature intended – dressed up in bondage gear. Girls: squeeze yourself into a **mini-skirt**, **opera-length gloves** and **seamed stockings** £120 (Skin Two catalogue), for the full effect. Guys: **a pair of chaps** (jeans with the arse cut out), plus a **laced neck T-shirt** £120 (also Skin Two) should do it for you. All you'll need on top of that is a copy of ***Deathtrap Dungeon*** £34.99 (most high street retailers) and a small bottle of **Johnson's Baby Talc** £1.99 (Boots) and you're on your way...



More info: **www.skintwo.co.uk**

SHORTS

SQUARESOFT TEAM UP WITH EA

Electronic Arts and SquareSoft have announced a deal that will see the formation of two new subsidiaries, one in the US and one in Japan, both with exclusive publishing rights to Square's forthcoming range of PC and console titles. This will include *Parasite Eve* (see PlayStation Zone on page 33), *Bushido Blade 2* and *Brave Fencer Mushashiden*. No announcements have been made about a European deal.

KOMBAT'S BACK

Mortal Kombat 4 moves from Cardboard City into Third Dimensionsville when it hits the shelves in October. Yup, Midway/GT's ageing gang-



fighter has finally come of age and sports a whole host of new gut-wrenching special moves, 15 playable characters and four classic characters, as well as a "60fps" 3D engine. Each arena now also has objects which can now be thrown at your opponents.

SYSTEM SHOCK 2 ANNOUNCED

News just in of a sequel to Looking Glass' classic *System Shock* came to light. The game is to be published by Electronic Arts under the Looking Glass brand, and will feature the complexity and depth of the original while incorporating advanced 3D technologies, physics and AI based around the Looking Glass Dark engine.

AOE EXPANDS

The Romans make a belated appearance in the new *Age Of Empires* expansion pack, due out later this year from Microsoft. As well as three other civilisations, the pack will include several new units, 25 new buildings, three campaigns and larger, more diverse maps – including some in the Mediterranean Sea area. Watch out for a full review in the very near future.

LIONHEAD CODER HASSABIS LEAVES

Demis Hassabis, child prodigy über-coder, *Theme Park* creator and long-time associate of Peter Molyneux, has left Lionhead to set up his own development company, Elixir Studios. The reason for the split is not yet known, but we understand it was amicable, and *Black & White*, Lionhead's first project (see Lionhead Diary, page 168), has not been affected.



In *Rainbow Six*, even the hedges are fully modelled in 3D. They are neatly squared off though.

Six of the best for Clancy fans



Rainbow Six features an eclectic range of characters. Check this lot out.

Select a team, conceive a plan, grab a gun and go kick some terrorist butt in Red Storm's new strategy thriller

REPORT Phil Wand

Due later in the year is Tom Clancy's *Rainbow Six*, a mission-based action/strategy game that puts you in charge of an elite multinational taskforce. The object of each mission is to infiltrate terrorist installations and save the planet from certain destruction. Make just one mistake and it's curtain time.

The plot unfolds in typical Clancy style, with sinister conspiracies and earth-shattering consequences. Choose your crack squad from a pool of 20 skilled specialists (including an SAS commander and an MI5 officer), and then carefully plan your raid with the help of a 3D interpretation of the target area. Although the game has been designed for single players against a computer enemy, the action is team oriented, which makes head-to-head and collaborative Internet play all the more fun.



Never let one go in a tightly zipped envirosuit.

NEW STAR WARS BLASTER

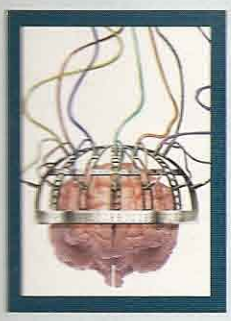
The unofficial follow-up to *Shadows Of The Empire*, *Rogue Squadron* (which seems to have its feet firmly planted in the shoot 'em up camp) is expected to be released by LucasArts before Christmas. Set in the period between *Star Wars: A New Hope* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Rogue Squadron* takes you to a critical juncture in the conflict between the Rebel Alliance and the Galactic Empire. The game will feature a variety of mission types, including dogfights, search-and-destroy, reconnaissance, escort duty and rescue. In one mission scenario, you receive a brief to liberate Rebel Alliance troops from the planet Kessel, known throughout the galaxy as the site of a brutal Imperial prison and spice-mining operation. You must locate the prison facilities, free the captives and escort the Rebel shuttles away from the planet, all the while defending against imposing Imperial forces such as AT-ATs, AT-STs and TIE Fighters.



With superb 3Dfx visuals, *Rogue Squadron* not only looks great, but also moves at quite a pace.



Rogue Squadron is also coming out on the Nintendo 64, which explains the arcade feel of its gameplay.



TECHHEAD

Sound cards? Who needs 'em? Well, we won't if Microsoft's all-digital speaker system is as good as it sounds

WORDS Warren Chrismas



The SideWinder Force Feedback Wheel – we want one!

FACTCANNON

Big sticks and 12-inch balls with handles are among the items heading your way soon

Giant joystick manufacturer **CH PRODUCTS** have announced that all their products will eventually be available in USB (Universal Serial Bus) form. New lines include a force feedback steering wheel and a wireless joystick. More details when we get 'em.

Novelty controller of the month? The Titans Sphere from US-based **SECOND GENERATION RESEARCH LABS** consists of a 12-inch ball with two handles poking out of the centre. Apparently, you hold it in your lap and twist the handles to move around. Hmm... It'll probably be over here in time for Christmas.

We forgot to mention it in our Windows 98 feature last month, but **MICROSOFT** (0345 002000) have released a companion disc for the new operating system. *Plus! 98* includes *McAfee AntiVirus*, a Computer Artworks screensaver, an archive utility, a deluxe CD player, a photo-editing application, *Lose Your Marbles* (a strategy game from Sega), *Golf 98 Lite*, and loads more crap to fill up your hard disk. *Plus! 98* costs £39.99.

Speakers cornered?

Microsoft promises cleaner, crisper audio on your PC – without a sound card



Full details have emerged of Microsoft's new, all-digital PC speaker system. The Microsoft Digital Sound System 80, which consists of two satellite speakers and a sub-woofer unit featuring an integral 80-watt amplifier, can be connected directly to a PC via a USB port (see Ask Wazza, page 144), negating the need for a sound card.

Software includes a Windows-based, 10-band graphic equaliser, which enables you to save personalised settings for different types of music.

To utilise the full digital functionality of the system, you will need to be running Windows 98 on a P166 (or better) fitted with a USB port, although inputs are also provided for connection to standard analogue devices including sound cards. The system goes on sale in October at around £180.

Also due from Microsoft in October is the SideWinder Force Feedback Wheel – a Formula One-style steering wheel featuring force feedback technology – and the motion-sensing SideWinder Freestyle Pro gamepad. The wheel and pedal set, which is to be priced at around £150, will be bundled with full versions of *CART Precision Racing* (*PCZ* #61, 72%) and *Monster Truck Madness 2* (*PCZ* #65, 70%). The Freestyle Pro, meanwhile, will be supplied with *Motocross Madness* (see 50 Most Wanted, page 41) for around £50.

Microsoft: 0345 002000



Microsoft's new speakers produce music and effects without a sound card. How? It's magic, obviously.

DEAR MR HAWORTH...

Pete Haworth of Haslington (see last issue's Mailbox) and the other ten per cent of the population that are left-handed will no doubt be pleased to hear that Saitek's forthcoming range of controllers includes a series of joysticks with configurable fire buttons, throttle lever, swivel feature and hat switches, which can be fully adjusted by way of a hex wrench for left- or right-handed gamers.

Along with a new range of 3D pads, which feature both a directional pad and a mini analogue stick, and a Microsoft Force Feedback-compatible R4 Racing Wheel, the 3D Sticks form part of a new line of Cyborg controllers from Saitek, designed and styled by London-based Seymour Powell. Previous projects from the design house include the Casio Baby-G watch, the Intercity 250 train, motorbikes for Norton and, er, the Tefal Freeline cordless kettle. Which is nice.

No news on pricing or availability yet.

Saitek: 01454 855050



It can't brew you a cuppa, but it may make gaming easier for left-handers.

THE DETAILS

SUPPLIER Orchid
PRICE £49.99
TEL 01256 479898
WEBSITE www.orchid.com

THE REAL DEAL

Is Orchid's NuSound 3D sound card top of the pack?



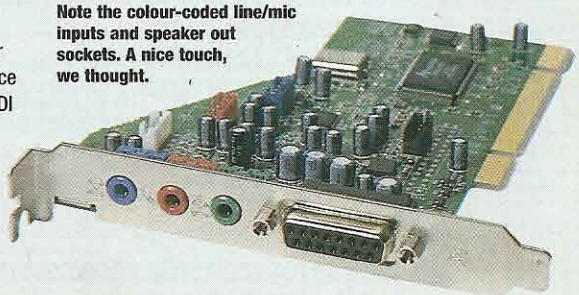
Another month and another smart new sound accelerator designed to take advantage of Microsoft's wizzy DirectX audio component, DirectSound3D. Orchid's tiny board is based on Aureal's Vortex AU8820 chipset, so the NuSound also supports Aureal's A3D Interactive technology, an advanced two-speaker surround system which is supported in a number of games including *Unreal*, *Forsaken*, *Battlezone* and all of LucasArts' recent titles.

Indeed, LucasArts' *Jedi Knight: Ambush At Altyr 5* (a cut-down version of *Mysteries Of The Sith*) is bundled with the card and demonstrates its capabilities well, with great directional sound and smart effects. Also supplied is *Shipwreckers!*, otherwise known as *Overboard!* (*PCZ* #58, 68%) and a suite of Voyetra sound utilities.

Like other low-cost, PCI-based audio cards, sound samples are stored in your PC's main system RAM rather than in memory on the card itself. The NuSound's 64-voice WaveTable synth produced good results with our test MIDI file. We particularly liked the ease with which you can switch the options (32 to 64 voices, Game or Pro mode), depending on whether you want performance or sound quality, or both if your PC is up to it. You'll need at least a 133MHz Pentium with Win95/98 to use the card and, importantly, a 200MHz Pentium with MMX to take advantage of the A3D positional sound.

The NuSound 3D can emulate the SoundBlaster Pro, although this uses an extra hardware interrupt. We had mixed results with our (intentionally awkward) DOS test programs. It worked fine with *Prince Of Persia* and okay with *Cool Spot*, but many of the sound effects went missing with *Sensible Soccer*. Nevertheless, if you've got a decent-spec PC and you're only really interested in Windows-based gaming, then the NuSound 3D looks like a very good alternative to the Diamond Sonic Impact (*PCZ* #64, 91%).

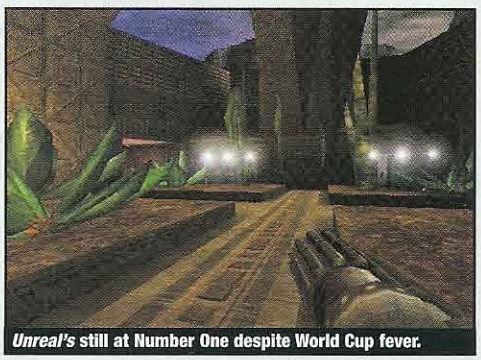
PCZ VERDICT **89%**



Note the colour-coded line/mic inputs and speaker out sockets. A nice touch, we thought.

CHARTS

The ultimate chart rundown, past and present, continues in your favourite PC games magazine. This little lot is what *you've* spent your money on recently, and also one, two, and five years ago



***Unreal's* still at Number One despite World Cup fever.**

CHART COMMENT

Unreal conquers all, and rightly so, being the lavishly colourful light show that it is. Whether it stays in the chart for as long as *Quake II* has (28 weeks so far – ninth longest) is another thing entirely. Whatever the case, you can be sure of hearing the name of *that* particular game for a good few years to come.

Another current chart hit destined for long-term fame and fortune is the already quite famous *World Cup 98*, a long-time obsession of EA Sports that has finally given us punters exactly what we are looking for. If a prediction was forced out of us though, a bet on *World Cup 98* re-taking the top spot apres the real World Cup might look pretty rock solid.

The surprising new entry this month has to be the awesome *Commandos* from Eidos, particularly in light of the position it went in at and the strength of the opposition. Oh, and the fact that it's the *only* new entry this month. Did we say surprising?

Paul Mallinson

THIS MONTH'S TOP20

LW	TW	TITLE	LABEL	GROUP	WKS IN CHT	PCZ SCORE
1	1	**UNREAL**	EPIC MEGAGAMES	GT INTERACTIVE	2	93
2	2	**WORLD CUP 98**	EA SPORTS	ELECTRONIC ARTS	5	91
-	3	**COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES**	EIDOS	EIDOS INTERACTIVE	1	87
8	4	**CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 97/98**	EIDOS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS INTERACTIVE	34	90
4	5	**ULTIMATE SOCCER MANAGER 98**	SIERRA ONLINE	CENDANT	9	90
6	6	**TA: CORE CONTINGENCY**	GT INTERACTIVE	GT INTERACTIVE	3	90
3	7	**QUAKE II MISSIONS: THE RECKONING**	ACTIVISION	ACTIVISION	3	84
7	8	**TOMB RAIDER 2**	EIDOS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS INTERACTIVE	30	94
10	9	**MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98**	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	39	94
9	10	**QUAKE II**	ACTIVISION	ACTIVISION	28	97
11	11	**X-FILES UNRESTRICTED ACCESS**	FOX INTERACTIVE	ELECTRONIC ARTS	5	NR
20	12	**TOCA TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP**	CODEMASTERS	CODEMASTERS	29	86
13	13	**AGE OF EMPIRES**	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	35	94
14	14	**GRAND THEFT AUTO**	DMA	TAKE 2	30	92
18	15	**MEN IN BLACK**	GREMLIN INTERACTIVE	GREMLIN INTERACTIVE	32	49
5	16	**SENSIBLE SOCCER '98**	SENSIBLE SOFTWARE	GT INTERACTIVE	3	90
12	17	**MIGHT AND MAGIC VI**	UBI SOFT	UBI SOFT	4	59
21	18	**WORMS 2**	TEAM 17	MICROPROSE	30	82
17	19	**STARSHIP TITANIC**	ZABLAC	ABLAC	11	91
22	20	**TITANIC - ADVENTURE OUT OF TIME**	EUROPRESS SOFTWARE	EUROPRESS SOFTWARE	2	NR

COMPETITION

WIN THE ENTIRE TOP 20!

***PC Zone* and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 20. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer this simple question:**

QUESTION: Who programmed the 3D engine for *Unreal*?

Just answer the question and send it on a postcard, along with with *all* the information requested, to the address below

- *Name / Address / Postcode / Daytime phone number / E-mail / Job title / Company name / Age if under 18*
- *Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies*
- *Are you a current subscriber to PC Zone?*

Send your entry to: *PC Zone* Chart Compo CPCZ9808A, Customer Interface, Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North, Bristol BS12 0BQ, UK. (Closing date: Monday 10th August 1998)

Terms and conditions: Only entries with all the questions completed and received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The Editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. And all that. Phew!

MEGASTORES

(compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA 1998)

ChartTrack

ELSPA

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

"*Unreal* at Number One?! The hardware manufacturers must be rubbing their hands with glee! Expect memory shares to rise."
Jonathan, London (spooky@chilling.demon.co.uk).

"*StarCraft* deserves to be higher in the charts than *Supremacy*. It would be in the Top 10 if the bloody shops didn't all price it at £35."
Jimi H Stroud (jimih@oholland.dircon.co.uk)

"*Grand Theft Auto's* still in there? Controversy can do wonders for a game's popularity."
Tom Francis, Felpham (pentadact@btinternet.com)

Had your eye on the charts and have something to say about them? Write in and we'll print the best comments here. Send comments to: The Bloke Who Looks After The Charts, PC Zone, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ, or e-mail us at editorial.pczone@dennis.co.uk.

RETROCHARTS

1 YEAR AGO...

1	Carmageddon	*SCi*
2	Voicetype Simply Speaking	*IBM*
3	X Wing versus TIE Fighter	*LucasArts*
4	Theme Hospital	*EA*
5	C&C Red Alert	*Virgin*

2 YEARS AGO...

1	Settlers II	*Blue Byte*
2	Duke Nukem 3D	*US Gold*
3	Euro '96	*Gremlin*
4	Civilization II	*MicroProse*
5	Championship Manager 2	*Domark*

5 YEARS AGO...

1	7th Guest	*Virgin*
2	Secret Weapons Of The Luftwaffe	*US Gold*
3	Space Quest IV	*Sierra On-line*
4	Sherlock Holmes 3	*Mindscape*
5	Sherlock Holmes 2	*Mindscape*



Rumour has it the next *Abe's* game will use the *Unreal* engine and will be full 3D.

Abe to the rescue

The cuddly green alien with his mouth sewn up has a new story to tell

REPORT Richie Shoemaker

Abe's Oddysee had platform fans crying with laughter and screaming in frustration earlier this year. Its sequel, *Abe's Exoddus* (out in September), promises even more of the same addictive torture we've all come to know and love.

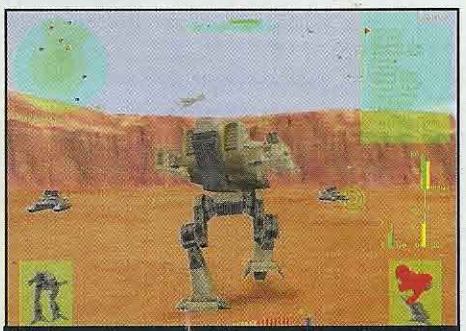
Picking up where it left off at the end of *Abe's Oddysee*, our lovable green chum again needs your help to save more Mudokon from Glukkon servitude. In Necrum, the Mudokon city of the dead, Abe must find a way to stop the Glukkon as they dig up the deceased to make soft drinks out of their bones (s'true!). A wider range of emotions and new 'GameSpeak' additions have blessed the Mudokon race this time around, spicing up interaction and puzzle-solving significantly.

Don't expect a huge leap in technology for *Abe's Exoddus* though. Graphically it will be enhanced from the original, but remaining 2D for pretty much the duration of the adventure.

MECHWARRIOR RIDES AGAIN

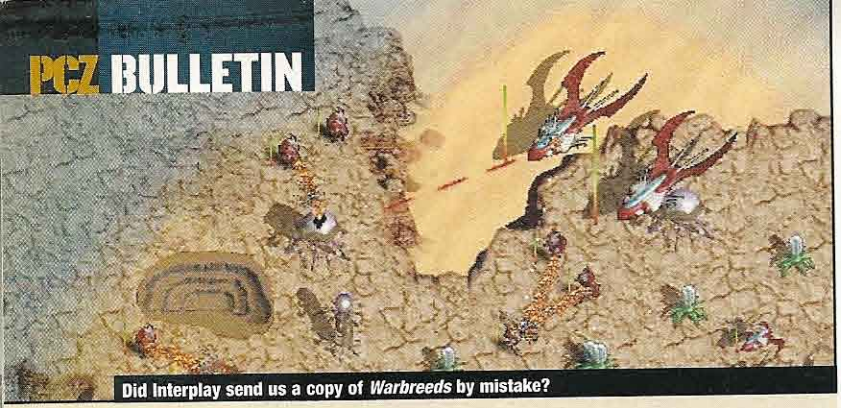
The latest in the *MechWarrior* series is due for release at the end of the year. Set in the year 3058, *MechWarrior 3* sports 20 all-new missions, four distinct areas, and one objective: to defeat all other clan warriors. As usual, the plot unfolds in the rich *BattleTech* universe, where you are given command of a ground-pounding MechWarrior and any of 33 different weapons.

The latest *MechWarrior* game has 18 different Mechs to choose from, and boasts an array of network features which enable up to eight players to slug it out over LAN or modem.



With *Heavy Gear* now breathing down its neck, the *Mech* series is not as all-powerful as it used to be.



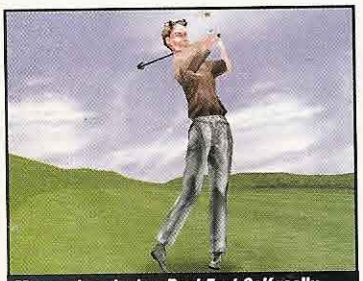


Did Interplay send us a copy of *Warbreeds* by mistake?

EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL

Interplay's new *A.I. Alien Intelligence* is a real-time strategy affair offering unique simultaneous land and space combat, a swarm of customisable game features, and over 150 different levels of technology to research and exploit. You control one of several alien species with a view to repopulating desolate areas of the galaxy. Each race has access to 12 types of unit and a mind-boggling 10,000 ship designs.

Interplay claim that the play area is larger than any other real-time strategy game currently on the market, with indigenous life forms inhabiting the game's many planets. Look out for it in late autumn.



Mmm, nice slacks. *Real Feel Golf* really does have a unique visual style of its own.



If this moves as smoothly as it looks, Ubi Soft could have a real hit on their hands.

Make us feel real

Most consumer items with the phrase 'real feel' in their titles tend to be made of wipe-clean latex and are available solely by mail order from ads in the back of *Genital Gawper*. Until now, *Real Feel Golf* from Ubi Soft promises to be equally exciting, albeit in a less overtly sexual way. The name refers to the unique analogue control system which enables you to use the mouse like a real golf club *(Eh? – Ed)* for greater accuracy and control. It looks nice too, with multiple camera angles, different weather conditions, and golfers represented by *Tekken*-style polygon people. Here's hoping they add an option to shatter your opponent's knees with the back of your club, like a great big bastard.



The original had a cult following.



The sentence bottom-left reads: "IRA has been recruited." Eh? What?

NEW IMPROVED JAGGED ALLIANCE

If you fancy a liberal smattering of RPG with your real-time strategy, then perhaps *Jagged Alliance 2* is the game to get excited about when it arrives later this year.

Like its predecessor, *Alliance 2* centres on recruiting a mercenary army and directing them to lead a coup. The game is played in real time, with turn-based combat, and features a new graphics and combat engine, numerous NPCs and 24-hour clock cycles. Check out **www.sir-tech.com** for more info.

SHORTS

TURN-BASED COMBAT ALERT!

Fancy a lengthy battle against the forces of Darkness in a land chocka with orcs, demons, Caroline Quentin and the like? Would you like said battle to involve the lengthy pauses and sweat-soaked calculations of turn-based combat? Then you might like *Spellcross*, from SCi – especially as it's only 25 quid. Let's face it, you're not going to have a job, are you?



NEW UBI SOFT GAME SERVER

Ubi Soft have recently started their online games service. Multiplayer servers are now de rigueur for games publishers, and are usually offered free of charge. Ubi Soft are no different in this respect, as their new Net service is currently open to anyone with a copy of *Redline Racer*. Future events include contests and tournaments and a larger games library.

ANOTHER FINE MESS

Those of you with a passing interest in classic games will have heard of *MAME*, the hugely popular multi-arcade game emulator. *MESS* is a new emulator that works along the same lines – except that instead of enabling classic arcade games to be run on your PC, *MESS* emulates a host of old home computers and consoles. At the moment it supports the NES and Megadrive, as well as the more obscure Colecovision, TRS-80 and Colour Genie. The official homepage is at **http://internetter.com/titan/mess/**. Future events include contests and tournaments.

RETRO'S REVENGE

The third in Microsoft's retro-pack series is set for release this September. Entitled *Revenge Of Arcade*, it features five classic games: *Ms Pac-Man*, *Xevious*, *Rally-X*, *Mappy* and *MotoS*. Microsoft say it'll be like "owning five arcade machines of your own". We couldn't possibly comment until our fifth arcade machine arrives next month.



? There are 38 famous fighters in EA Sports' forthcoming *Knockout Kings*



Not a huge degree of realism, but a large dose of fun.

STIR IT UP

Fans of non-complicated flight sims will be pleased to hear that MicroProse are working on a sequel to their *Top Gun* 'action-oriented' flight sim. Eschewing complicated flight dynamics and control methods in favour of simple up, down, left, right, fire controls, *Top Gun: Hornet's Nest* puts you in the role of Maverick, the wise-cracking, hot-dogging, er, flim-flamming pilot from the film of the same name.

Thirty missions, three different campaigns, air and ground targets, fast-moving (and presumably 'in-your-face') graphics and multiplayer support make up the game's many features, while realism takes something of a back seat. *Top Gun: Hornet's Nest* is released this winter.

FOR THE RECORD

"*Theme Park 2* is in development, as is *Theme XXX*. It's hard to say at the moment which will be out first"
Glenn Corpes, Bullfrog head of development, lets slip about their new top-secret porno game.

"I can't work out how to fk the women"**
PC Zone's Charlie Brooker gets to grips with the 1985 ZX Spectrum 'classic' *Sex Crime*.

"I am thrilled to join Infogrames. The chance to play a key role in designing an interactive soccer product for kids has been a personal goal and represents an exciting challenge"
Brazilian footie ace Ronaldo in dazzling vocal form.

"When I was a kid I used to walk into a games store and see all these little boxes on the shelves. Every box was like this window into a totally insane, intoxicating and exciting experience. That was just so mind-boggingly incredible. I don't get that anymore"
Alex Garden, co-founder of 'rag-tag' development studio Relic Software, grows up at last.

"All these people with their '98 seasons can go fk themselves!"**
Jon Hare, creator of *Sensible Soccer World Cup '98* (previously known as *Sensible Soccer 2000*), from an interview published in *PC Zone* #58. Oh, the irony.



CITIES

PC Zone leaves the Big Smoke to see if a small town within 20 minutes of London exists... Hello, it's Hemel Hempstead (yes, we know it's not a city)

WORDS Garth Sumpter

WHO THE DICKENS WOULD SHOP IN THIS TIME BUBBLE?



FLISS

30, violinist who was found hovering around the Gameboy section

"I travel a lot on trains as a professional musician, so I buy Gameboy games now and then. My husband and I do have a PC at home. He uses it to run his business on and he even has a website. I just like to play a few games on it.

"The last one I played was *Discworld*. I'm a Terry Prachett fan, so it's a game I can finish. Mind you, some of the puzzles were weird, even for a *Discworld* story! Hubby likes to think he's in touch with his female side, but I know that he's really a boy and that he's got a secret copy of *Tomb Raider* which he plays when I'm away. One day I'll let him know that I know, but for now it's too good a sport to let him think he's getting one over on me. That'll be the day!"



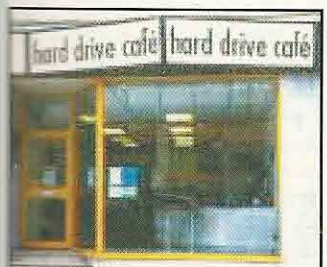
PAUL

34, freelance Health and Safety officer plodding around the shop in a dangerous-looking shirt

"The shirt? It's really cool, eh? I bought it in Italy where I've just got back from today. I had a great time there. But the day I was due to go, my computer crashed, with a report on it for a client. I'm in here looking for some recovery software."

Have you tried Dr Soloman?

"I don't even know where his surgery is, mate! Still, I had a look at *Blade Runner* – I'm a huge fan of the film. But as I've just spent a fortune on my holidays I might wait until I can find a second-hand copy of it. After all, I don't care who else has played it, just how much it costs, especially as I bet this recovery software I need is not going to be cheap."



Try as we might, we just couldn't find a local Internet café in Hemel Hempstead, although there are a few places where you can receive e-mail or surf the Web – but they don't serve food as such. You have to go a fair old way from Hemel before you can surf the Web café-style, to the Hard Drive Café in Luton, which is run by Clare Harris and John Warlow.

INTERNET CAFÉS IN HEMEL/ WATFORD/LUTON

NAME: Hard Drive Café
ADDRESS: 16 King Street, Luton, Bedfordshire LU1 2DP
TELEPHONE: 01582 485621
WEBSITE: www.tintin.hardcafe.co.uk
OPENING HOURS: 11am-8pm Mon-Fri
10am-6pm Sat
Closed on Sunday
COSTS: £2.50 per half hour or £4 per hour using five Pentium terminals
MENU: Extensive cold snacks

The town that time forgot

HOW GAME IS HEMEL HEMPSTEAD?

Back in the 1950s, someone came up with the idea of London satellite towns, and Milton Keynes was born. However, it appears that almost 100 years before that, someone else had thought of it and invented Hemel.

If, like me, you live in grimy inner London, you need to feel there must be better places than the ones we occupy. And there are. These idyllic places, which can be found easily enough, are called Hemel Hempstead, Watford and Luton.



In a sleepy little town like Hemel, you don't really expect 12-foot-high neon signs. But surely calling something Ye Olde Computer Game Shoppe is taking quaint to ridiculous extremes?

OLDE AND MORE WIZENED

Andrew Payne is the owner of Ye Olde Computer Game Shoppe, having just bought the lease from the shop next door (amazingly enough, called Ye Olde PC Shoppe). Is small-town life really so dull that ridiculous shop names are the only way to inject excitement?

"It's not excitement all the way," Andrew admits, "but every day offers good, solid, clean fun. I got into selling games through pure fluke – I used to be a mechanic. When out scuba diving one day, a faulty demand valve meant that I drank half a lake when I got to 20 metres. This resulted in pneumonia and a forced rest, during which time I really got into computer games.

"Then, at New Year, I picked up my girlfriend and my knee caps shattered (the result of years of karate, *not* her weight!). I was off work for six months, and started going to car boot sales selling my own extensive collection of games. Finally, I bought Ye Olde Shoppe, and inherited loads of PC games, too!"

That was only in March this year, so Andrew is still getting to know PC games, which are slowly but surely taking over from his first love, console titles. "I find the PC market a bit harder to predict, probably because it's made up of older people who are more discerning about games," he suggests. "PC games are a bigger risk but there's more money to be made."

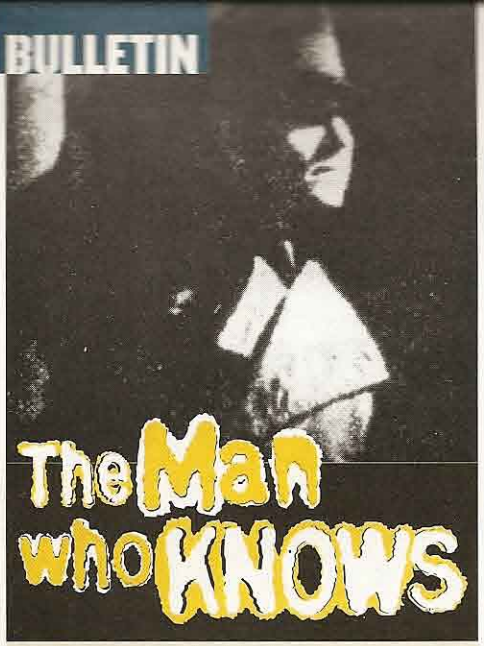


For Andrew Payne, having a shop is better than having your legs broken.

So which PC titles are selling best?

"At the moment, and probably because Hemel is a strange place, *The X-Files* is a best seller, with EA's *World Cup 98* doing well, too. I'm also selling a lot of Prism's '3 Plus 1' titles – a collection of rather good budget games that I'm not getting any loading problems with." At £2.99, Andrew says they're flying off the shelf, along with the usual diet of *Tomb Raider*- and *Doom*-style games.

What does Andrew play himself? 'I've just finished *Doom II* which was great, apart from a rather tame ending, and I had a go at *Tomb Raider* but couldn't really get into it. I'm looking forward to trying out *Men In Black* and *Incoming*, and I've ordered myself a copy of *Quake* – just for research purposes, you understand."



Scandal, rumour, gossip and shame – the stuff of life for our industry mole

Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? That would be The Shadow, you cretinous fools. My concerns are the evils that abound in this cankerous industry.

Rain-soaked **Atlanta** is the location this month, to take in **E3** and all its sweat-stained glory. Our very own solar eclipse in loose-fitting slacks, **Steve Hill**, was at the centre of a violent encounter with a senior skunk for an unknown console game distribution company, Jack Of All Games. After innocently endeavouring to rip some advertising banners from the side of an escalator, Hill found himself on the receiving end of a tirade of abuse. "Go home. Your mum's got cake," Hill wittily retorted (a popular northern insult, I'm led to believe), only for the skunk to reply: "Would you like *me* to feed you some cake, you Scottish f**k?"

Hill has been called many things (fat, lazy, a drunken layabout who only reviews games in his lunch hour), but never Scottish. The two squared-up and, like so often throughout history, the American wimped out and vanished, his tail between his legs.

Meanwhile, news from the advertising world sees Rupert Murdoch's **Fox Interactive** courting trouble with the campaign for Tony '***Realms Of The Haunting***' Crowther's console racer, ***N2O***. Magazine adverts were interpreted as urging young children to sample addictive narcotics, with slogans such as 'Never trip alone!' and 'Breath in. Breath out'. One wonders how they could have missed those particular interpretations at the design meetings... sniff, sniff. Fox has formally (and embarrassingly) apologised for attempting to corrupt the children of the world for purely commercial gain, and promised never to do it again.

The son of ageing hippie minstrel **Bob Dylan** is producing a film based on the Sega hit ***House Of The Dead***. It's thought Bob's lad was attracted to the project because the title reminded him of his family upbringing.

The movie, penned by the writer of Jim Carrey hit ***The Mask*** and Jean Claude Van Damme atrocity ***Time Cop***, features ultra-hip zombies running wild at an American college. One presumes the game's task is in telling them apart from the regular, foetid student body.

A name not featured in this column for several minutes is one **Lara Croft**. There is to be a new pair of breasts adorning posters, promotional material and touring the trade shows, making us hard. They belong to Leeds-born **Nell McAndrew**, and I'm now accepting bets on how long she'll last in the role. Eidos are saying November. I'm predicting the end of the week. Of course, I'll be on hand to comfort the distraught lass when the time comes.

Go now, I tire of your company.

Upwardly Mobil

The *MechWarrior* brand name has generated more than £150m

Toys become titles – for old and young

REPORT Charlie Brooker

Gaming trendspotters attending this year's E3 show would have come away stroking their chins and surmising that real-world toy crossovers seem to be the 'in' thing at the moment. You name it, it's appearing on a computer near you – everything from Barbie to Lego to Tonka trucks... to Playmobil, the latter being handled by Ubi Soft. Three Playmobil titles are in the works, with *Hype: The Time Quest* being the most interesting. It's an action-packed sword 'em up, a bit like a *Sesame Street* version of *Die By The Sword*. We'll be covering it in greater depth soon. For now, take a squint at the pictures and be satisfied.



Younger gamesplayers will like the characters, while older die-hards will love the nostalgia factor.



Hey, check out the fogging fogging effects. It's absolutely fogging marvellous. So marvellous I almost can't see the fogging image.



It's good to see software for younger players at last being taken seriously. (Disney Interactive, take note.)

ET THREE, IMPRESSIONS?

Think *SimCity*, think *Age Of Empires*, think 'dagger up the strap'. *Caesar III* is the second follow-up to Impressions' popular Roman resource management title. Boasting new features such as real-time gameplay and a single gaming screen showing your world in motion, Impressions are hoping that *Caesar III* will give them the kind of respect Microsoft earned with *AOE* last year.

Potential potentates not only have to deal with an ever-expanding empire, conquering Gaul and fighting off the invading Goths, but they'll also have to make sure their populace remains happy and well-nourished.

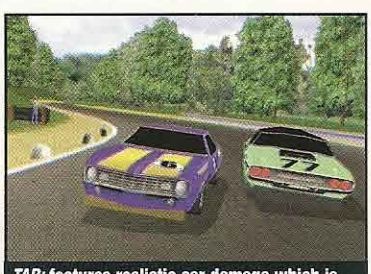
Caesar III is due for an autumn release, so we'll sit on our laurels until then.



Could *Caesar III* take the top spot from *Age Of Empires*?

MOTOR MUSCLES

If you've ever fancied yourself behind the wheel of a Ford Mustang, AMC Javelin, Plymouth Barracuda, Chevrolet Camaro, Pontiac Firebird or Trans Am, look out for GT Interactive's *Trans-Am Racing* this October. It's a 3D race sim that captures all the thrills and spills of the 1968-72 SCCA series. The developers insist that their physics model is the most accurate yet, and to help make the game accidents seem more realistic they even went to the extent of crashing the cars and analysing what happened. They also brag that their 16-player network option is unequalled by any other driving game.



***TAR:* features realistic car damage which is calculated on-the-fly so every crash is unique.**

TICKER TAPE

LAST-MINUTE NEWS, AS IT COMES IN...

STARTS++ Psygnosis are to publish Visual Science's extremely promising *Expert Pool*. First screenshots and more about the game in next month's issue of *Zone* **++STOP++** 3DO have confirmed that a sequel to *Army Men* is in the pipeline **++STOP++** Cavedog have announced the development of their very own first-person shooter, called *Amen: The Awakening*. They're describing it thus: "Part action, part thriller, part puzzle-solver and part cinematic epic, *Amen: The Awakening* takes a bold direction that sets a new standard for action-adventure gaming." **++STOP++** *Slave Zero* is a new third-person shoot 'em up on its way from Electronic Arts, expected in spring 1999. "Rampage through a bustling future metropolis as a 60-foot biomechanical leviathan," says the enthusiastic press release. Er, no, we say **++STOP++** Shiny are to license the *Messiah* engine to other developers **++STOP++** Jane's forthcoming *Fleet Commander* puts you in charge of a whole fleet of "the world's most sophisticated and lethal warships" with a responsibility to maintain stability in a politically unstable world. More next issue, out Thursday 6th August **++ENDS**



PLAYSTATION ZONE

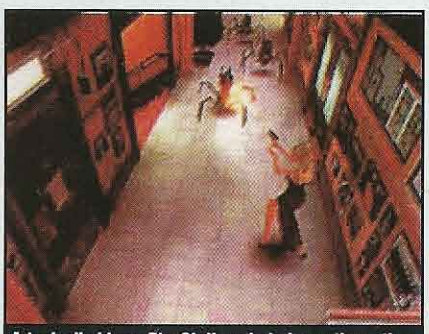
It may have the processing power of a P166 and pretty scabby graphics when lined up next to a Voodoo II card, but you can't deny that some of the best games appear at the 'Station

WORDS: David McCandless

A PlayStation game to look forward to immensely

Nom de plume: *Parasite Eve.*
Histoire: Latest game from legendary developers SquareSoft, previously responsible for *Final Fantasy VII* (very nice RPG, just out on PC).
Smells like: *Final Fantasy VII, X-COM, ChronoTrigger.*
Storyline: Good-looking, large-breasted Eve is a genetic experiment. She's stuffed with intelligent cells which are 'self-aware'. These cells can escape and infect other creatures like a virus. However, Eve is evil and plans to wipe out the entire world with her special cells.

Big deal: Combines gameplay elements from *Resident Evil II* (very good) and *Final Fantasy VII* (very good); glorious 3D-rendered still locations; shotguns, pistols and rocket launchers; fewer spells, more action; real-time combat; all games from SquareSoft are good.
Low point: 3D-rendered intro film (done by the special FX artist behind *True Lies*), while stunning, is hard to follow and very weirdo-Japanese. Hopefully, the plot won't be lost in translation.
Tech stuff: Should be a walkover for the PC.
Personal impression: Without question, a winner.



A typically blurry PlayStation shot shows the action.



Parasite Eve **– already one of the most eagerly anticipated PlayStation titles ever – has not yet been officially announced for release on the PC. Petition SquareSoft – we must have it!**

TWO TO WATCH



A PS title to make you 'zig-a-zig-aah'?

SPICE WORLD (Sony)

Not as bad as you'd think, but nevertheless good only for a small girl with pigtails and delusions of pop stardom, and maybe a few grown men with enough imagination to squeeze a pornographic fantasy out of 3D-rendered cartoon versions of the Spice Girls. Here you can remix their tunes, choreograph their movement, and then finally direct their video. May well form the blueprint of every pop-to-PC conversion to come.



Top blasting fun to come from Konami.

TIME CRISIS 2 (Konami)

Things a PlayStation can do and a PC can't. No 1: use a lightgun. Curse the multi-scan frequency of PC monitors because that 1280x1024 screen you're always polishing stops you from enjoying the delights of a glorious arcade conversion like *Time Crisis 2*. Two-player, with 'ducking' and stunning set pieces which plap on *Virtua Cop* and others of that ilk. Using a mouse just isn't the same.

REVIEWS



Visually impressive, with a few fun bits.

GEX: ENTER THE GECKO

Not a bit like *Mario 64*. No siree. Except this 3D platformer is, of course, very similar to the Nintendo 64 game. And so a bit like *Tomb Raider* as well. Except you pilot a lizard through various 'media' domains (Loony Tunes, Haunted House, etc), jumping, leaping and using your tail to solve puzzles and avoid nasties. Has the voice of Lesley Philips and some of the panache of *Mario 64*, but not all of it.

PCZ VERDICT 7/10



Digital diarrhoea from Gremlin.

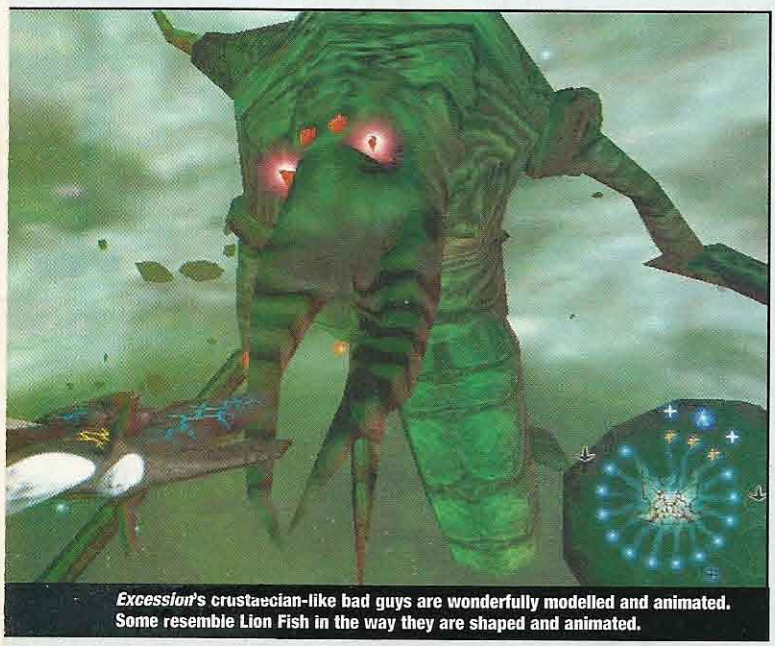
MEN IN BLACK

Normally we give trite movie tie-ins which pop up a year after the film release short shrift, because normally they're destined to be rubbish. *MIB*, you'll be pleased to note, is exactly that. Drawing from both the film and the original comic, it looks a bit like *Resident Evil* with Will Smith (an interesting prospect). Despite a faster, 'badder' PlayStation version, the gameplay is still rubbish.

PCZ VERDICT 3/10

EXCESSION TAKES ON PRIVATEER II

An early look at a game that combines the best of *Privateer II* with *Lylat Wars*



***Excession*'s crustaecian-like bad guys are wonderfully modelled and animated. Some resemble Lion Fish in the way they are shaped and animated.**

REPORT Paul Mallinson

Excession, to be released through T*HQ early in '99, has been in development for over a year and has been causing ripples among those in the online gaming community who've glimpsed it. Pitched as a fast action space shoot 'em up in the mould of *Privateer II*, it looks almost certain to redefine the graphical benchmark for this type of game. Early playable code indicates that developers GameFX are also on the right track in terms of gameplay. The bio-mutant storyline, about an evil race of aliens on a mission to take over the universe, is one we've heard before, but the atmospheric menace generated by the subtle graphics and sound effects makes up for that.

How 'deep' the game will be is as yet unclear, but GameFX have announced that strategies will have to be devised to complete the game. A definite release date is still being sought, and as soon as we have one you'll be the first to know.

*You can find more info at **www.gamefx.com.***



It wouldn't be a surprise to hear that HR Giger (*Alien*) has designed this game. Some of the monsters are disgusting.



If you thought the explosions in *Incoming* were good, check these babies out.



***Privateer II* versus *Lylett Wars* (N64) wouldn't be too far from the truth. Whether *Excession* will also feature trading has yet to be confirmed.**

DESERT ISLAND CDS

If Tom Hall, head honcho at Ion Storm, was stuck on a desert island with nothing but a PC, an unlimited power supply and five games of his choice, which would those games be?

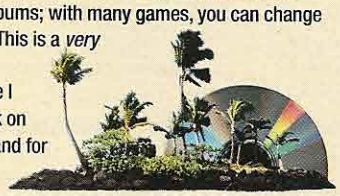


- **Doom + editor** (iD)
- **Quake + Quake C** (iD)*
- **Rescue Rover II** (iD)
- **Invasion of the Vorticons** (iD)
- **Worms 2** (MicroProse)

* Choice if only allowed one.

Comment

"Well, the five games I'd take to a desert island would have to be five games I could modify myself. Games aren't like albums; with many games, you can change the content. This is a *very* important criteria, since I may be stuck on this dang island for years..."



RED BARON II FLIES AGAIN

Following the lukewarm reception of their WWI flight sim sequel *Red Baron II*, Dynamix have swallowed their pride, listened to customer feedback and jumped into the 3D acceleration arena. *Red Baron 3D* will be a complete technological upgrade, available as either a free 'superpatch' download from the Internet, or as an off-the-shelf title (with refunds available for hapless sad sacks who didn't listen to us and bought the original anyway). Improvements include full 3Dfx support (with plans for D3D and Open GL support), meaning new cockpit and terrain graphics, new explosions and, for the first time, trees.

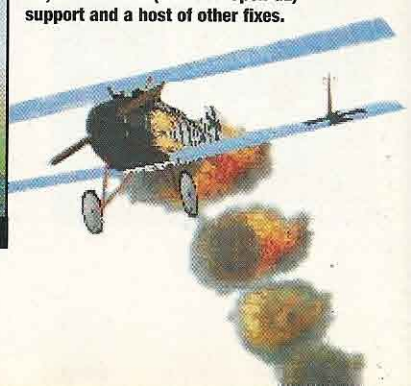
Dynamix are following I-Magic's online flight sim lead too: included in the package will be a new multiplayer feature enabling up to 100 people to fly at once via WON (an online gaming service). A free public beta test of the service will be on offer from mid-July onwards.

*If you want more details, check out the Sierra website at **www.sierra.com**.*



Now you can play *Red Baron II* against other people over the Internet.

Get the free patch, called *Red Baron 3D*, for full 3Dfx (D3D and Open GL) support and a host of other fixes.



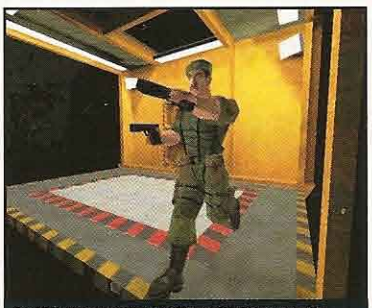


The right to bear arms comes in very hand in *Prax War*.

All-out Prax War

It's 2032 and Prax Industries, sole suppliers of all the world's energy, are abusing their position by overpaying their directors, overcharging their customers, and then announcing obscene profits in their annual Report and Accounts (far-fetched or what?). Importantly, they have their own private army of nutters and an exotic array of outlandish weaponry – which is where you come in. As leader of a special forces team, you have to bring the nasty monopolising mega-corp to its knees.

Prax War includes highly detailed character animations, numerous weapons and vehicles, and full Internet/multiplayer support. EA are especially proud of the game's 'power plant', which is able to generate reflected light, colouring and shadowing effects without being detrimental to the frame rate. Look out for it in late autumn.



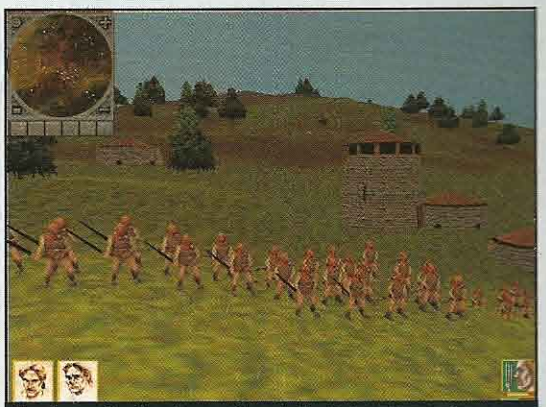
So the programmers thought they could include Saddam Hussein and no one would notice?



The 3D looks a bit weird in places, but the architecture and weaponry are top-notch.

TARTAN BARMINESS

93% of PC software sales in Russia are either pirated or counterfeit.



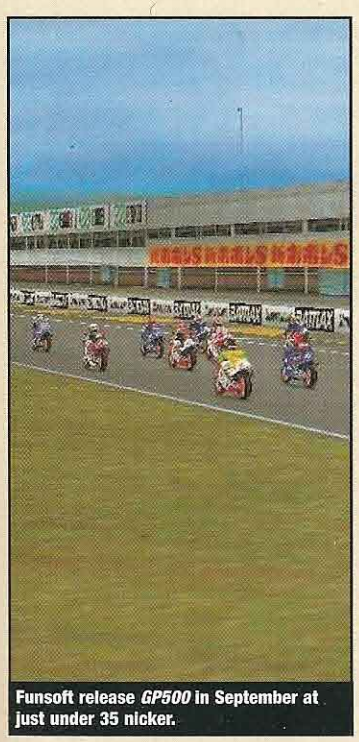
The clan gather together on the vale for their early morning briefing: "Get oot there and find us some whiskey!"

Due early next year, *Tartan Army* is the second title from ex-Gremlin development team Red Lemon. It's a real-time 3D God sim that recreates an anarchic Scotland in the Dark Ages, and comes complete with espionage, inter-clan power struggles, black puddings, territorial disputes and filthy imperialistic Sassenachs.



This bloke hasn't even got his kilt on!

The game features over 100 Scottish clans and territories, 20 types of troops, and a landscape constructed from real satellite images. The object is to either conquer all the clans, ascend to the Scottish throne or defeat King Edward and shoo him down south. Recover your birthright, your freedom and your nation's honour. So off with the underpants, on with the skirt and out into battle.



Funsoft release *GP500* in September at just under 35 nicker.

BIG BIKES IN GP500

Fistfuls of throttle, a kneecap on the tarmac and a raised middle digit as you blast out of a tight corner... Ah, the idyllic life of a motorcycle courier. Now think of how dangerous 'real' racing can be and you have some idea of what developers Ascaron were trying to recreate in their upcoming bike title *GP500*.

A smooth-looking 3D racer developed in association with a professional GP rider, it includes 15 tracks from the 1997 season, over 100 riders, three different superbike classes, and boasts a full-featured management sim. Spectacular crashes complete what looks set to be an exciting title.

MORE WARHAMMER



No, it looks nothing like *X-COM*. Oh no.

Fans of the table-top paint-'em-up *Warhammer 40000* will be pleased to hear of *Chaos Gate*, the latest turn-based strategy game to be set in Games Workshop's heavy metal universe.

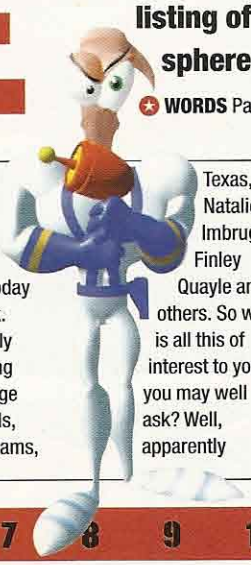
This squad level isometric title, á la *X-COM*, puts you in command of up to 12 Ultramarines against the forces of Chaos through 18 linked scenarios. As well as including a comprehensive mission editor, the game should also enable over 40 different actions for each unit, and full pre-mission squad configuration. Also making an appearance will be Predator tanks, Land Speeders, Psykers and Dreadnoughts. *Chaos Gate* is released in the autumn.

You can find more info at ***www.ssionline.com***

HOTLINE

Behold: the *PC Zone* HotLine, the potentially definitive listing of all that's happening in the gaming sphere over the next two months... or so

WORDS Paul Rose



WED 1ST

It's Wednesday night, which means it's also Get Your Pants Pulled Down Over Wireplay By The *PC Zone* Crew night. Phalanx cannons at 20 paces, gentlemen. Choose your piece.

TUE 7TH

Wireplay host the ***Mega Red Alert Tournament*** between 7pm and 10pm tonight. Players will be competing for the title of King Red Alert. It promises to be 'mega'. Or, at the very least, quite a lot of fun.

SUN 5TH

Party In The Park, a huge multi-act music festival, takes place today in London's Hyde Park. Among the many highly talented acts appearing will be – ahem – George Michael, the Spice Girls, the Verve, Robbie Williams, Texas, Natalie Imbruglia, Finley Quayle and others. So why is all this of interest to you, you may well ask? Well, apparently Interplay are one of *Party In The Park*'s associate sponsors, and they will be taking every opportunity to promote ***Earthworm Jim 3D***, which is released later this year. There may even be the odd chance to experience the game first-hand. You never know your luck.

TUE 14TH

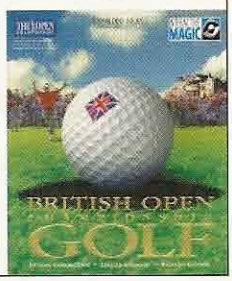
National Kiss A Barmaid Day – eek!

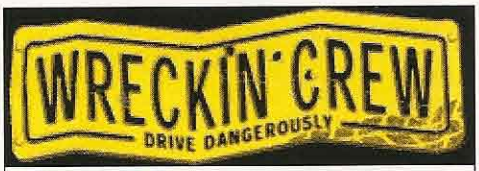


JULY 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

FRI 3RD

British Open Championship Golf – Limited Edition (Interactive Magic) is launched. Golf, for those who have never encountered the sport before, has one player being 'on' in the middle of the playground, who calls out the name of one of the other players, who must attempt to run to the other side of the playground without being... Oh, wait, that's British Bulldogs.





FRI 10TH

Wreckin' Crew (Telstar) comes out. It's all well and good owning a car, but if all you're going to use if for is mowing down pedestrians and smashing into other vehicles, you might as well spend your money on loads of cheap booze and get a copy of *Wreckin' Crew* instead. You see, smashing and driving is the central pillar of *Wreckin*'s gameplay.

SUN 12TH

The entire planet comes to a standstill today (except for Americans, probably, who could fit what they know about 'schoccher' into a commemorative Princess Of Wales thimble), to stay at home and watch the World Cup Final. It's happening at the St Denis stadium in Paris and kicks off at 21.00 BST, man.





WED 5TH

Neil 'Moon Man' Armstrong's birthday. Also the 35th anniversary of Marilyn Monroe's death.

FRI 7TH

Revenge Of Arcade (Microsoft): ***Ms Pac-Man***, ***Xevious***, ***Rally-X***, ***Mappy*** and ***Motos*** goes on sale today. You may not have heard of them, but these five 'classic' arcade games are allegedly perfectly recreated in this anthology follow-up. One to wave under the noses of your retro-loving, PlayStation-owning neighbours.

Toh Shin Den (Funsoft) – Whether this conversion will avoid the 'pretty, but pretty vacant' criticisms of the PlayStation original remains to be seen, but an all-polygon, 3D-card-assisted beat 'em up has got to be something of an event when the genre is so poorly represented on the PC.

WED 12TH

Happy birthday Pete Sampras, you 27-year-old, Codemasters tennis game-endorsing, thick-eyebrowed, tennis-playing dish, you.

AUGUST 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

FRI 14TH

Today's game releases include...

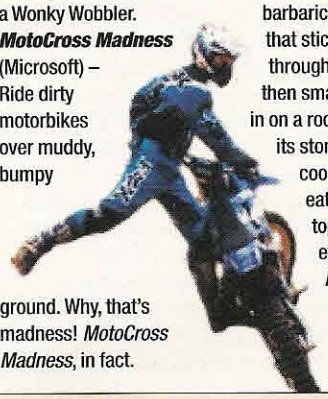
KKND 2: Krossfire (Melbourne House) – Whether or not you were convinced by the, frankly, not greatly original *Krush Kill 'N' Destroy* is utterly irrelevant; Melbourne House have hopefully taken on board the many criticisms of the original, and introduced a touch of originality into the blatant ***Command & Conquer*** rip-off mix.



Colin McRae Rally (Codemasters) – There's a bit of a buzz surrounding this race 'em up, endorsed by 'Smilin' Colin McRae. Codemasters don't release a great many games, but when they do they're usually worth looking at. ***TOCA*** – certainly proved that the firm can do realistic racing as well as they can do funny little cars on Indian restaurant tabletops.

Meat Puppets (Funsoft) – Some sort of Cyberpunk isometric shoot 'em up-cum-adventure thing, in which you control an amnesiac Cyberbabe called Lotos Abstraction (incredibly, that isn't something we just made up). The attention to detail in the graphics has to be seen to be believed, yet it could play about as well as a Wonky Wobbler.

MotoCross Madness (Microsoft) – Ride dirty motorbikes over muddy, bumpy ground. Why, that's madness! *MotoCross Madness*, in fact.



Bass Masters ClassicTE (THQ) – Whether you agree with fishing or think it barbaric, you can't deny that sticking a hook through a fish's jaw then smashing its head in on a rock before slitting its stomach apart, cooking it and eating its flesh is top fun. Relive the experience with ***Bass Masters***. Which sounds a bit like Masterbaters.

SUN 16TH

National Expose Yourself In Public Day

MON 24TH

The 38th birthday of Cal Ripken Junior, who has probably endorsed all sorts of baseball games, which no doubt thrilled his American fans.



FRI 17TH

Games on sale today include…

Nightmare Creatures (Activision) – Like the silicone mammaries which spread across her digital chest, Lara Croft's influence has spread across the entire games industry. Just witness the anachronistic faux strumpet in *Nightmare Creatures*, who would seem to have been added as an assistant to the male Victorian adventurer hero of this third-person beat 'em up, purely to ensure column inches. Matron!



Sentinel Returns (Psygnosis) – Geoff Crammond, whoever he may be, was responsible for the original *Sentinel*, which was released some 87 years ago. The great man himself has personally supervised this long-overdue sequel. See *PC Zone*'s review of *Sentinel Returns* on page 100.



The X-Files (Fox Interactive) – "This could be a case for Mulder and Sculeeeee!" crooned Welsh strumpet Nerys Hughes, of Catatonia. Had she been referring to Fox Interactive's big-budget interactive 'missing episode' she would most certainly have been right. All the stars of the show appear, from Assistant Director Frank Skinner, to Muldoon and Scally themselves. However, you play some weird-looking FBI nobody.



SUN 26TH

Quake II/Quake/Red Alert LAN party at The Playing Fields, 139-143 Whitfield St, London. Allegedly 'BIG' prizes on offer. Telephone 0171 383 5850 for more details. No word on whether the competition will be 'mega', however.

WED 29TH

40th anniversary of NASA. Whatever that is.

16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

TUE 21ST

It's Robin Williams' 46th birthday!



FRI 24TH

WarGames (Electronic Arts) comes out. Why attach a game to a 15-year-old movie if you're going to ditch the film's 'lone computer hacker with pet robot pterodactyl' plot for some real-time wargame guff set in the future, which bears about as much resemblance to the film as a crow does to a washing machine? It looks pretty nice, however.

FRI 31ST

Today's game releases comprise…

Dune 2000 (Virgin) – If you can't stand the wait for ***Command & Conquer 2: Tiberian Sun***, this may be your only option. It's a classy reworking of the game which spawned the original *C&C*, and has acquired its own small, fanatical following. New graphics, remixed missions and genuine *C&C*-style gameplay from Westwood – the people who do it best.

Malkari (Interactive Magic) – The big selling-point of this so-called 'epic' space strategy game is that some 40 players can take part over a local area network. Which is, like, quite a lot of people. Whether it's got what it takes to compete with Sid Meir's forthcoming *Alpha Centauri* will be the proving of this pudding. Whatever that means.



F-22 Raptor Gold (Electronic Arts) – You like you flight sims, which is why EA are releasing this special limited edition thing, containing extra missions and all the aeriel combat a small boy could possibly wish for.

FRI 21ST

Games on sale today include…



Young Blood (GT Interactive) – Action/RPG based upon an American comicbook created by the American comicbook industry's enfant terrible (as in 'terrible at writing, terrible at drawing' etc) Rob Liefield. Diehard, Badrock, Riptide, Shaft and Vigue are but some of the improbably-named superheroes who you'll control during the adventure.

Total Annihilation: Battle Tactics (GT Interactive) – Overdue add-on for the splendid ***Total Annihilation***. Naturally, a sack-full of all-new levels, mission parameters and dozens of never-before-seen units will be introduced. Of course, ***Total Annihilation 2*** will be with us before the year is out. Hopefully.



Tides Of War (GT Interactive) – Fairly original-sounding real-time wargame set on the high seas. Assorted warships from through the ages do battle in massive, 60,000-screen levels. Stop off at a port to pick up new weapons and scurvy-inducing hardtack biscuits.

16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

FRI 28TH

Games hitting the shelves today include…

Spellcross (SCi) – Turn-based fantasy/strategy stuff in which your personal advancement through the ranks is as important as blowing the opposing armies – there are three in total – to bloody bits. Turn-based games are desperately unfashionable these days. We'll see if *Spellcross* can reverse this trend.



Tiger Woods '99 (EA Sports) – Electronic Arts were jumping through hoops when they snapped up the rights to use golfing wunderkind Woods in a series of games. Bet he's crap at British Bulldogs.



Tiger Woods – The Tournament (EA Sports) – "I'm the Tiger Woods add-on!" Rather than releasing a steady stream of extra course packs over a period of months, Electronic Arts have decided to release them all on the same day as the full Tiger Woods game.

Tiger Woods – The TPC Courses (EA Sports) – "No, I'm the Tiger Woods add-on!" It would be really funny if this was called *The TCP Courses*, because it would imply that Tiger Woods had fallen over on the course and grazed his knee, and required… um. Ahem. Anyway…

Brunswick Bowling (T*HQ) – Ten-pin rather than lawn bowling. We're not entirely sure what the point of a bowling simulation is. Like, what next? *Actua Shove Ha'penny*? *Virtua Skittles*? Bah.

Football Manager Live! (Europress) – Hey, another football management game! Can it kick ***Championship Manager***'s teeth in? Nah, of course it can't.

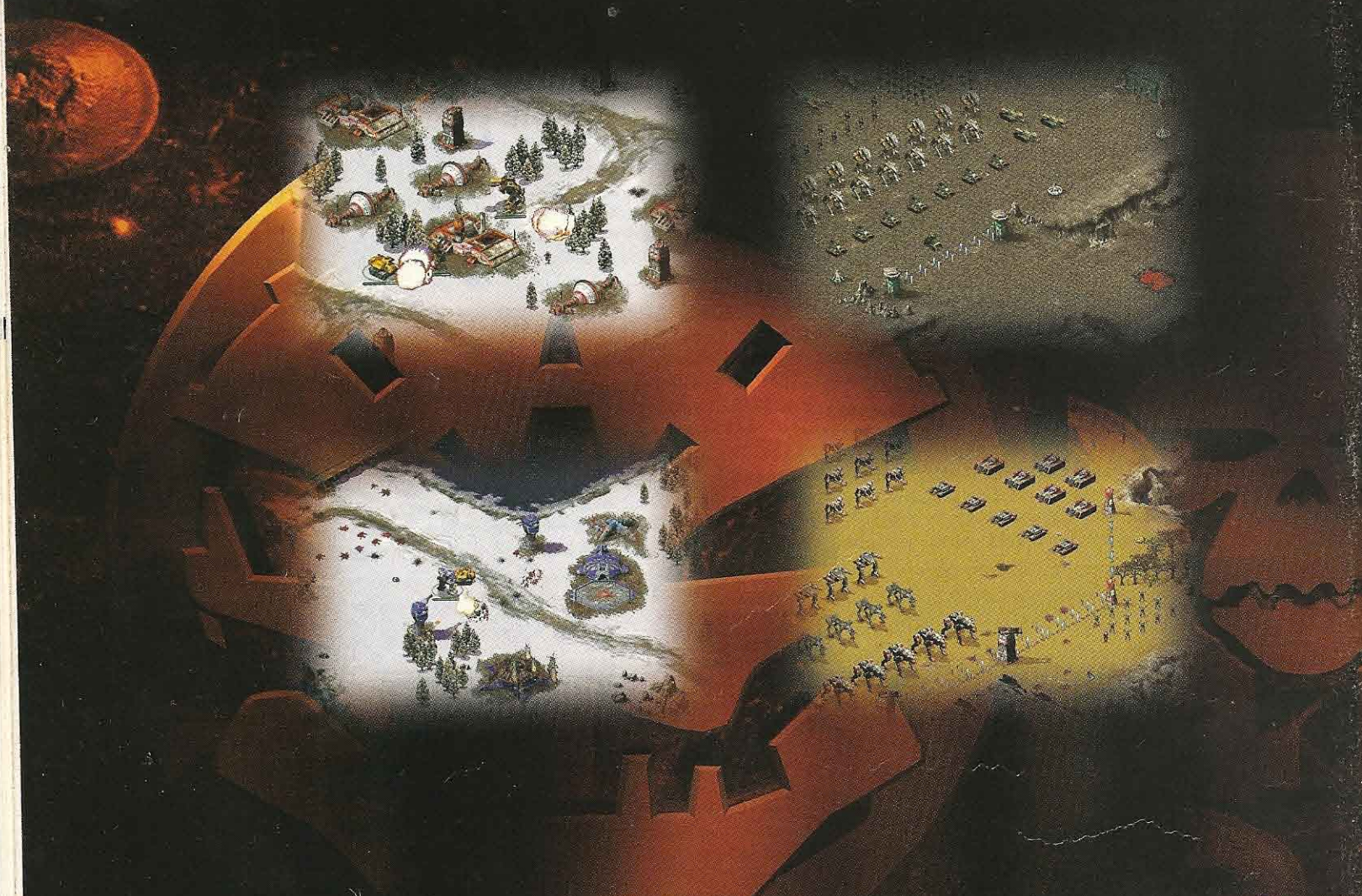


Spellcross: The Last Battle (SCi) – Mid-price ***X-COM*** clone that'll appeal to die-hard strategy fans.

MON 31ST

Unreal Level Editor (GT Interactive) goes on sale today. Now you get to devise your own *Unreal* levels to confound and frustrate your buddies. One of the neatest and most user-friendly level creator packs *PC Zone* has seen. Today is also a Bank Holiday. Is there no sanctity any more?

VIOLENCE IS CRUELTY AND HATRED OF THE PITY IS FOR THE

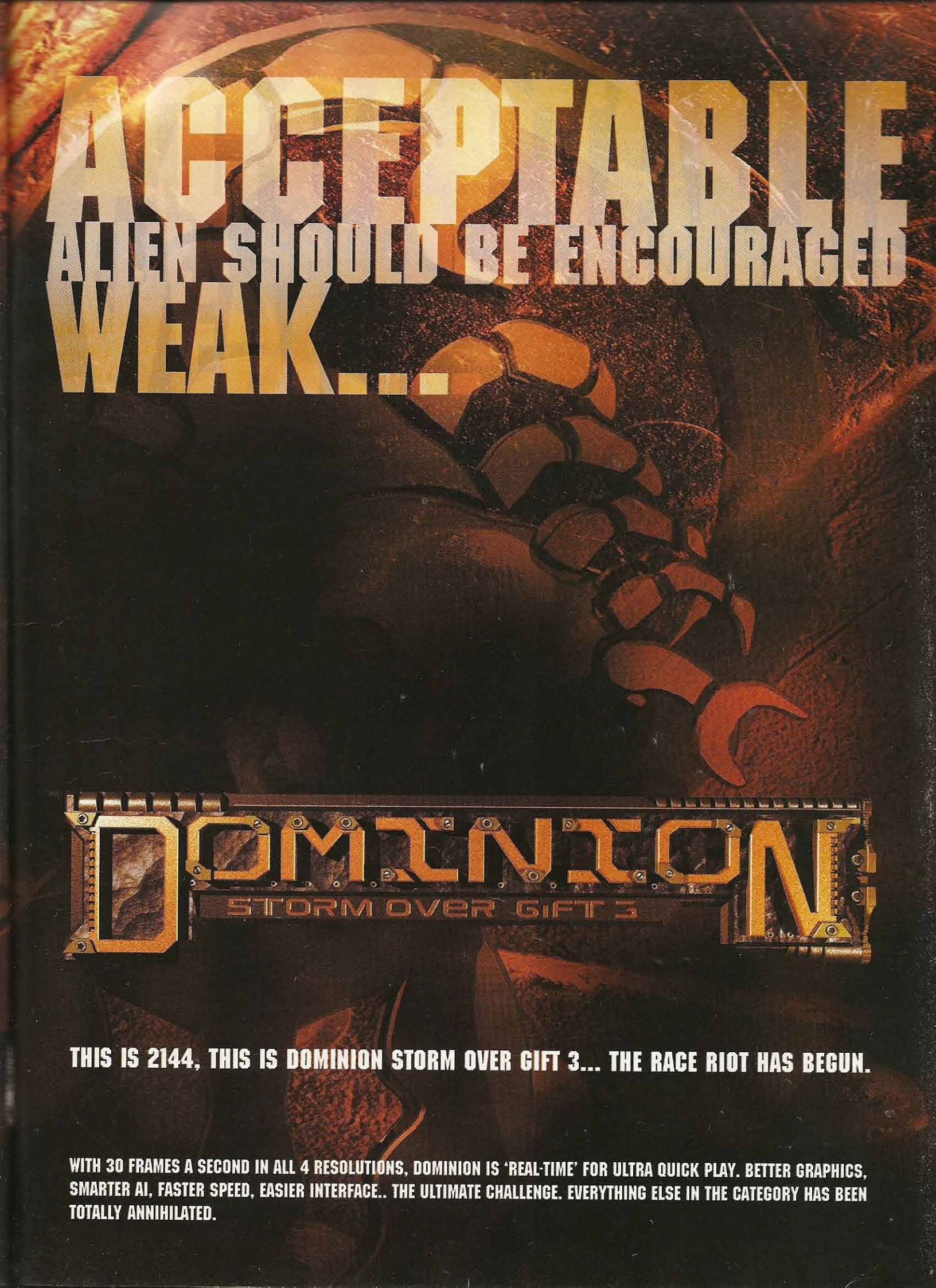


A TODD PORTER GAME

ION STORM

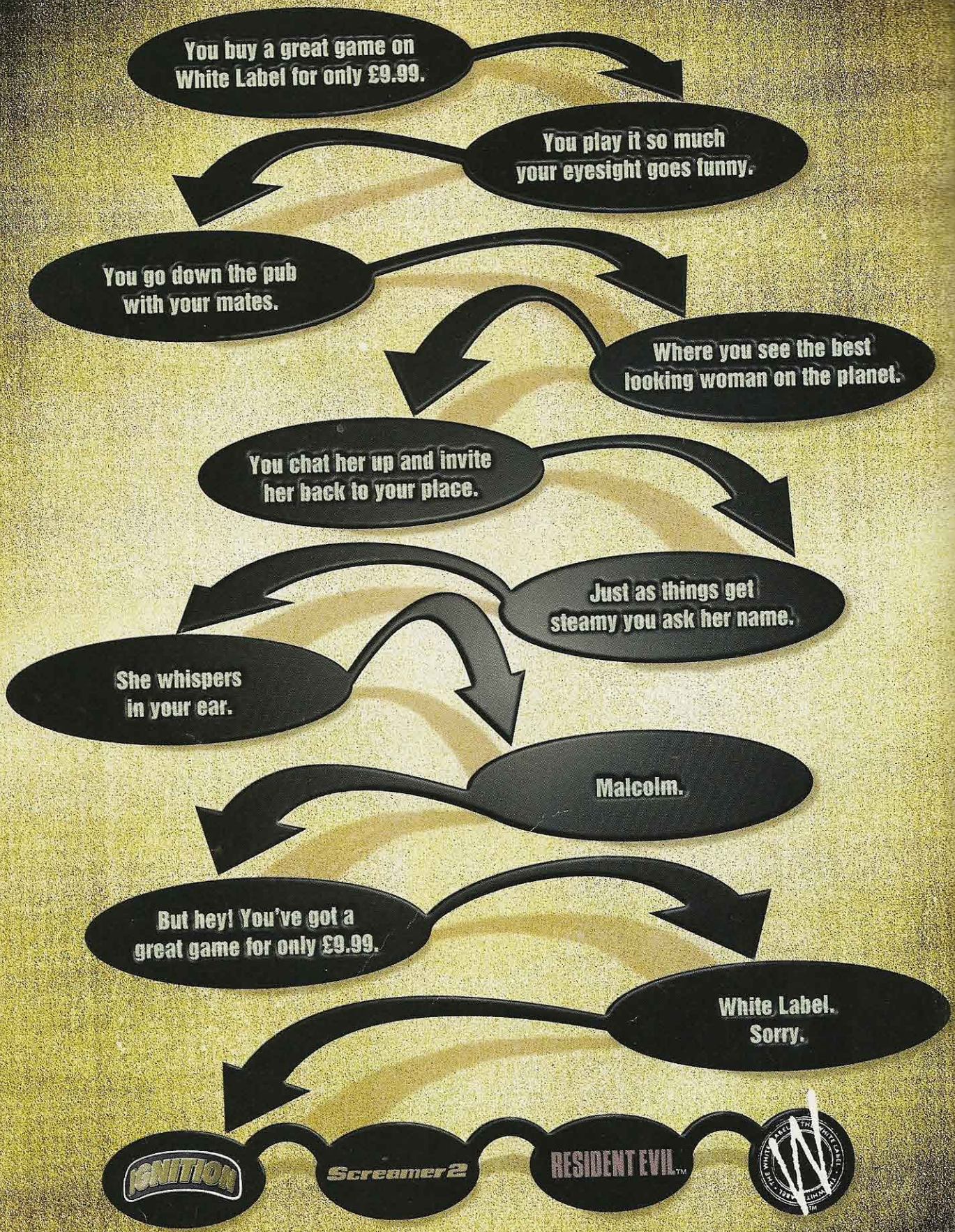
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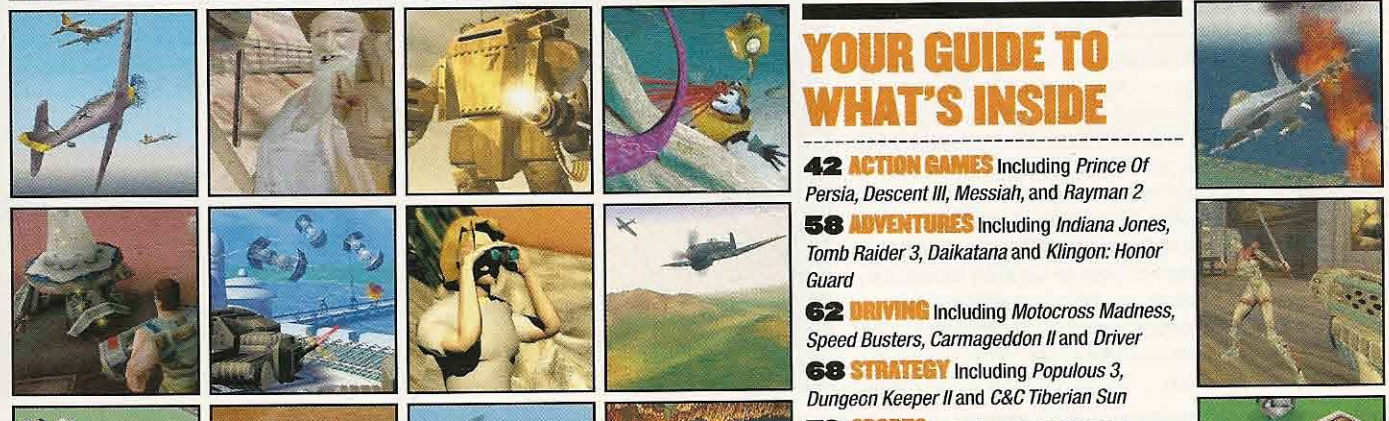
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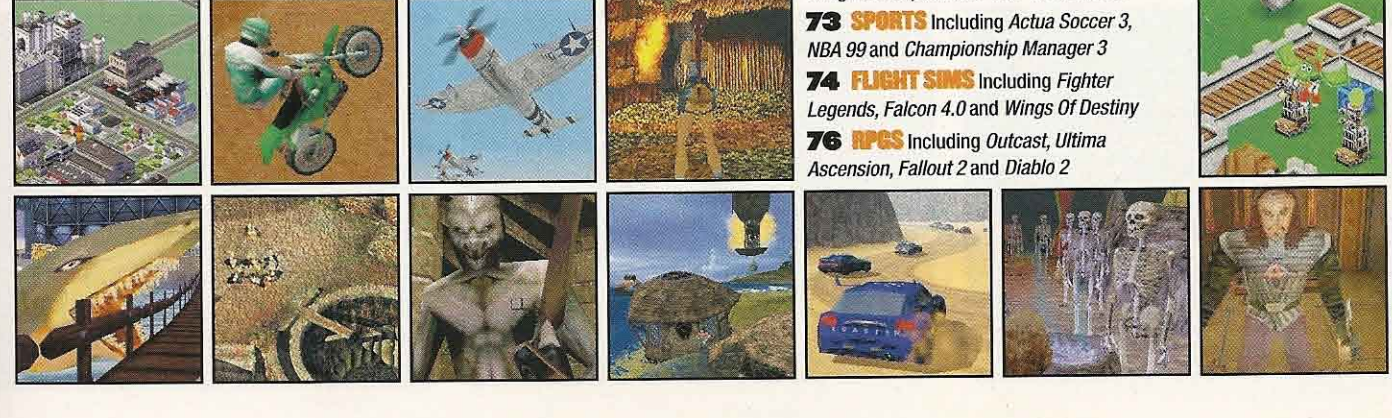


50 MOST WANTED!











Eye-splitting 3D visuals, ear-popping sound, mind-bending gameplay, spooge-raising concepts... If you thought you'd seen the best that PC games have to offer, think again.

At this year's E³ show in Atlanta, well over 300 upcoming games were shown to select members of the gaming fraternity, press and hangers-on. Some of the games were fugly, many were average, but 50 will blow you away.

Come with us through the next 30 pages as we select the 50 hottest games due to hit a store near you this year...

YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S INSIDE

42 ACTION GAMES Including *Prince Of Persia, Descent III, Messiah,* and *Rayman 2*

58 ADVENTURES Including *Indiana Jones, Tomb Raider 3, Daikatana* and *Klingon: Honor Guard*

62 DRIVING Including *Motocross Madness, Speed Busters, Carmageddon II* and *Driver*

68 STRATEGY Including *Populous 3, Dungeon Keeper II* and *C&C Tiberian Sun*

73 SPORTS Including *Actua Soccer 3, NBA 99* and *Championship Manager 3*

74 FLIGHT SIMS Including *Fighter Legends, Falcon 4.0* and *Wings Of Destiny*

76 RPGS Including *Outcast, Ultima Ascension, Fallout 2* and *Diablo 2*

PRINCE OF PERSIA 3D

PC ZONE TIP FOR THE TOP

The oriental adventurer gains an extra dimension. We sweep the muck under the magic carpet while no-one is looking

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Red Orb Entertainment
PUBLISHER Red Orb Entertainment
OUT Early '99
WEBSITE www.redorb.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Update of genuinely seminal title
- Fluid, realistic animation
- Elegantly simple interface
- It's *Prince Of Persia*, innit?

The whole world's going 3D. In fact, it always has been, it's just that games are finally catching up. The latest to earn the 3D tag is *Prince Of Persia*, which by a stroke of luck is actually the third game in the series. It's been five years since the last outing though, so why resurrect it now?

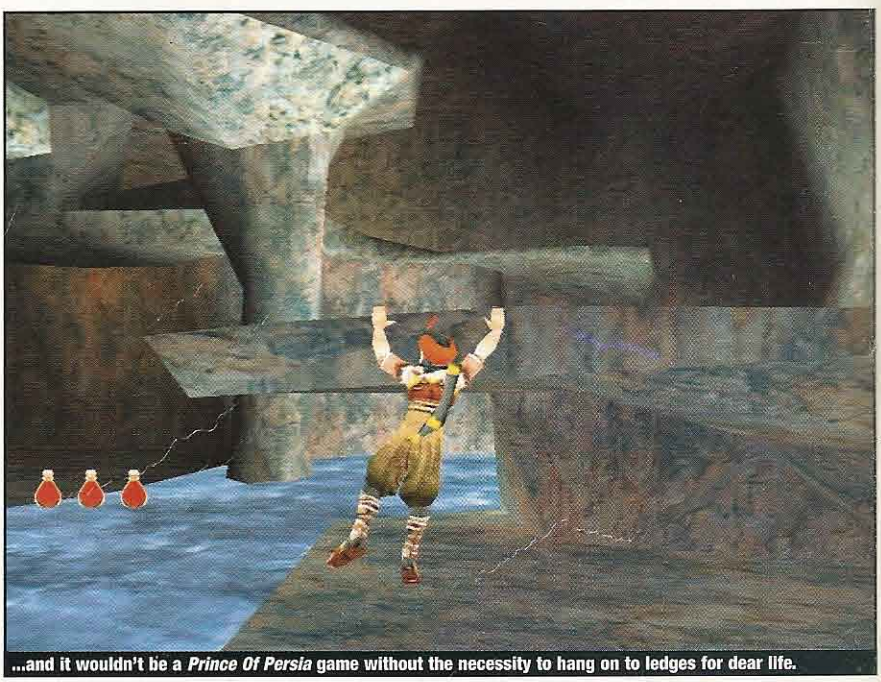
We tracked down its creator, Jordan Mechner, at the recent E3 show in Atlanta and asked him just that. Why, Jordan, why?

"The opportunity was there and it was kind of intriguing because Andy Peterson, the producer, had a really gung-ho bunch of artists and programmers who wanted to give it the full treatment – the best graphics, the best 3D. There's no sense in doing it if it's just going to be like 'take the *Tomb Raider* engine and slap a turban on it'. But they really convinced me that they wanted to push it further than it's ever been before and use the *Prince Of Persia* to do that. So I thought, 'Hey, Jeez, twist my arm.'"

Clearly, a side-on platformer and a full 3D extravaganza are two very different prospects. And making the leap between them is a tricky business, as Jordan admits: "Well, the hard thing about 3D, of course, is you need at least a couple of extra keys. So



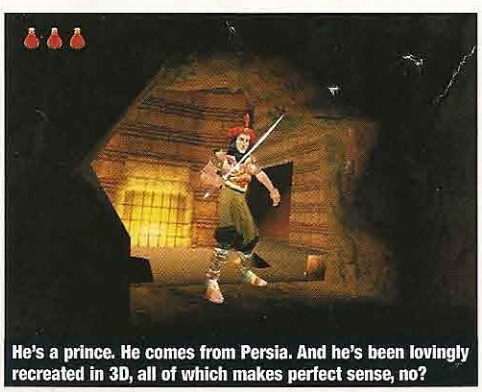
Fans of the original will be familiar with the Prince's constant leaping antics...



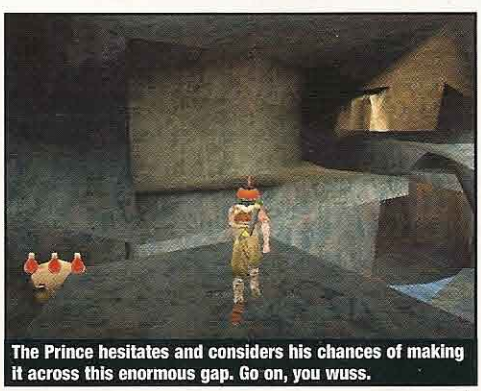
...and it wouldn't be a *Prince Of Persia* game without the necessity to hang on to ledges for dear life.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

***Prince Of Persia 3D*'s story has a distinctive *Arabian Nights* flava, and picks up where *Prince Of Persia 2* (*PCZ* #5, 89%) left off. King Assan, the Sultan's younger brother, is furious to find out that the Princess, who was arranged to be married to his deformed son Rugnor, has already gone and married the Prince. So he lures the Prince and Princess into a trap, and the Prince is beaten to within an inch of his life and thrown into the dungeons to die. The Princess is then hauled away by Rugnor to his stronghold high in the mountains, where he intends to beast on her at his leisure. The Prince is having none of it though, and must escape from prison and set out on a perilous adventure through exotic locales in pursuit of the Princess and her captors.**



He's a prince. He comes from Persia. And he's been lovingly recreated in 3D, all of which makes perfect sense, no?



The Prince hesitates and considers his chances of making it across this enormous gap. Go on, you wuss.



Prince Of Persia 3D features much more fighting than the first two games, which is nice.



"I've got a huge sword and I'm not afraid to use it," said the Prince to no one in particular.



"Man wanted to hang on to not-very-dangerous ledges," the advert said. Lying bastards.

the design challenge that we're still wrestling with is: how do you keep it to basically four directional arrow keys and two keys – because that's all I can do personally. Some of the people on the team can use both hands simultaneously all over the keyboard, but that's personally my limit and that's what we had on *Prince 2*, so we're trying to stick to that.

"But I think it's working out. It's a trick to keep people from getting disoriented. I'm sort of a check on them, because many on the team are very good core gamers and they play games like *Tomb Raider* and *Final Fantasy* all the way through. They don't seem to have any trouble with menu bars, but I'm hopeless with them."

The first two *POP* games had a massive following, but that was then and this is now. So who is this game going to appeal to?

"I certainly hope that people who played *Prince 1* and *2* will be able to pick this one up and feel like they're continuing where they left off a few years ago, but with better graphics. I also hope that 10-year-olds and 12-year-olds will be able to enjoy this one, too. As well as that, I hope my wife will play it, because she never played *Prince of Persia 1*."

We've seen the game moving with our own eyes, and it seems to be an explore 'em up with swords. So is the emphasis on action, or adventure?

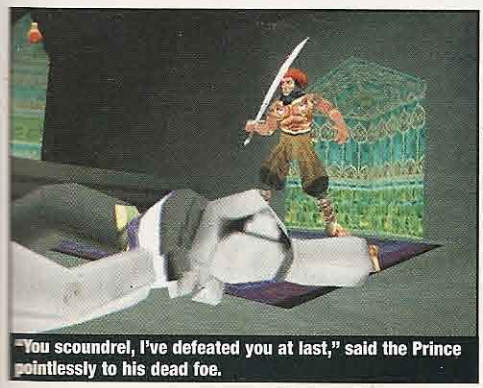
"We've tried to get the same mix of action and adventure that the first games had. The Prince doesn't have a gun; he doesn't blow out everybody in the room. There's a lot of thinking-type puzzles, but at the same time there's also a lot of action. I mean, the basic idea behind *Prince 1* was to take the first eight minutes of *Indiana Jones* and make a game out of it, and that's pretty much the mix that we're still trying to do."



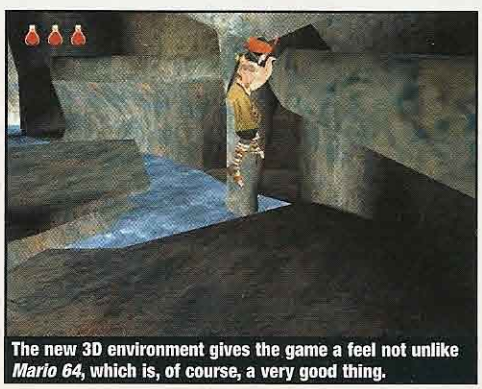
"Piercing a guard with an Arrow of Discord forces him to launch an attack on his colleague, enabling you to sneak past"

JORDAN MECHNER, GAME DESIGNER, RED ORB

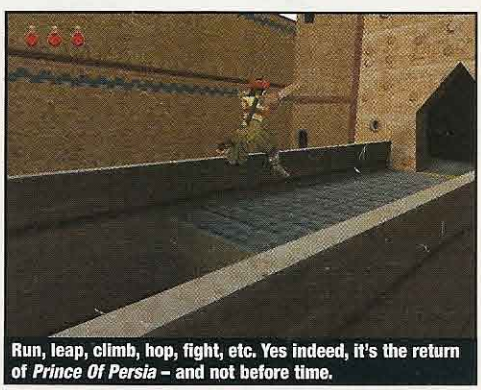
Latter-day gamers are accustomed to wielding an



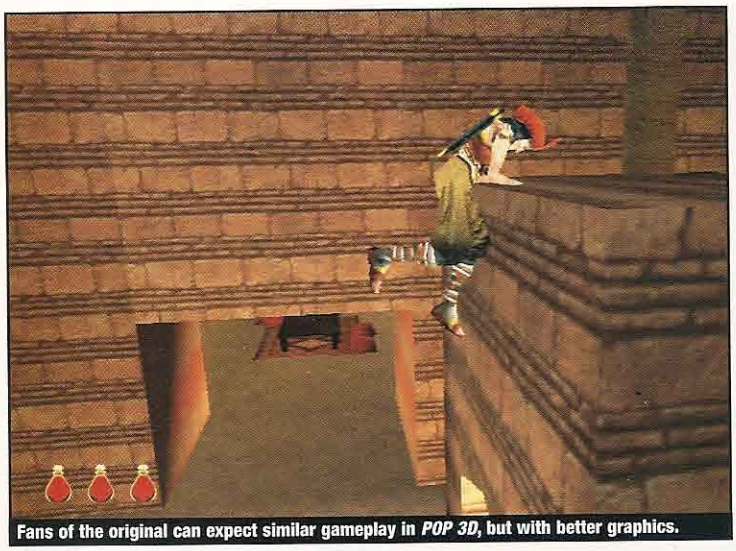
"You scoundrel, I've defeated you at last," said the Prince pointlessly to his dead foe.

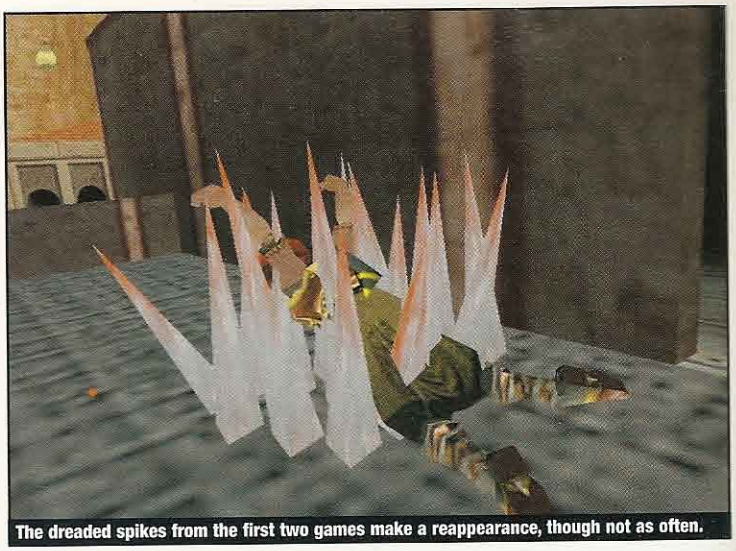


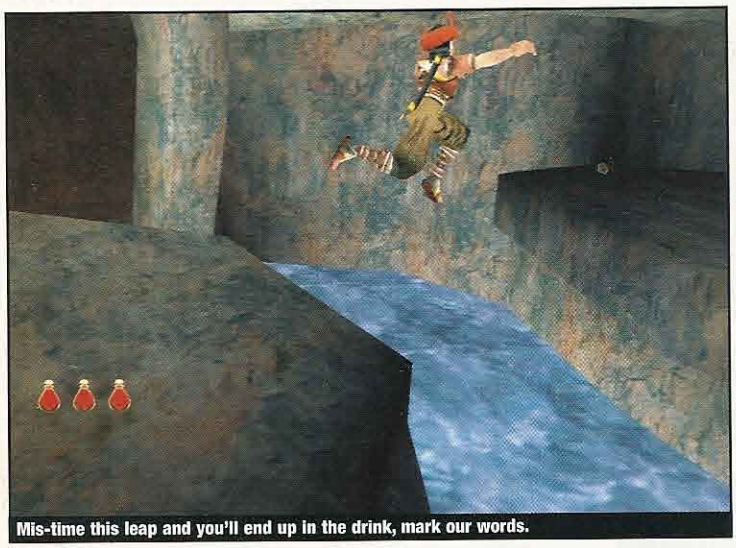
The new 3D environment gives the game a feel not unlike *Mario 64*, which is, of course, a very good thing.

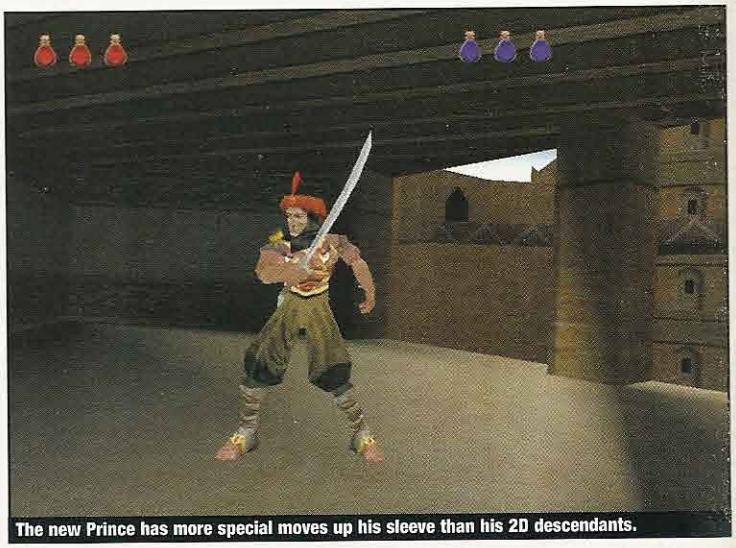


Run, leap, climb, hop, fight, etc. Yes indeed, it's the return of *Prince Of Persia* – and not before time.


Fans of the original can expect similar gameplay in *POP 3D*, but with better graphics.


The dreaded spikes from the first two games make a reappearance, though not as often.


Mis-time this leap and you'll end up in the drink, mark our words.


The new Prince has more special moves up his sleeve than his 2D descendants.

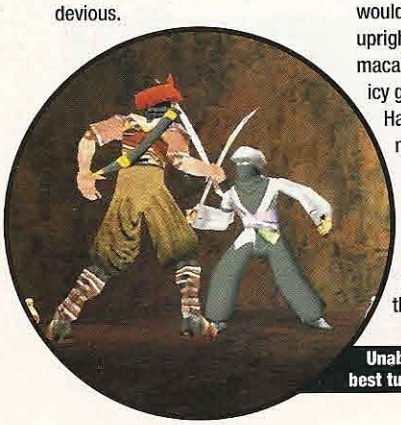
arsenal of weaponry that would shame even the most avid rifle-polishing *Guns 'n' Ammo* subscriber. *Prince Of Persia 3D* is lacking in the heavy firearms department, favouring a flashing blade rather than a smoking barrel, but Jordan doesn't foresee any problems: "I think there's room for swords, especially when you're in close. And the Prince does have one long-range weapon – it's a bow and arrow with which he can shoot spells and things."

Indeed he does, and some of the spells are particularly devious. For instance, piercing a guard with an Arrow of Discord forces him to launch a violent attack on his colleague, thus enabling you to sneak past.

On the subject of ugly wanton violence, Jordan says: "There's a fair amount. But of course, with respect to the seven-year-old contingent, we've tried to make it more suggestive than gory. That is, you should feel really awful, but it shouldn't be something that would make you turn off the game and never turn it on again."

The first game was renowned for the way the titular character would occasionally fall on some upright spikes, twitching in a macabre fashion as death took an icy grip on his prostrate form. Has this trademark demise made it into the 3D version?

"Absolutely. There's just a few things that were sort of signature things for the first games: spikes, pressure plates and gates. And even though they may be 15 per cent of the game now, as opposed to 95 per cent of the first game, you've still got to have them in there as touchstones"


Unable to decide who had the best turban, they came to blows.

Prince Of Persia 3D involves an inordinate amount of fighting, begging the question of when Jordan's last fight was.

"Physical fist fight? Probably ninth grade [13 years old]. I think some kid was teasing me and I decked him, then we got into a fight. To tell you the truth, I don't think I thought about it until you asked me just now."

As the scale of the recent E^3 show demonstrates, the industry has clearly moved on a little since the first *Prince Of Persia* game, as Jordan concurs: "There's a different mix of people at these trade shows. One big difference is that the first *Prince Of Persia* was just me at a desk with a computer. There was nobody really looking over my shoulder to see when it was going to be done or if it was going to make Christmas. And the idea of getting publicity for a game before it was finished – like this – would have confused me." PZ

THE GAME FORMERLY KNOWN AS...

For a bit of fun 'in the office', we've attempted to imagine what would have happened if alternative Princes had been drafted in as a late replacement. The frolics here at *Zone* just never stop...

PRINCE

The artist formerly known as a short-arsed weirdo sporting a third eyebrow on his top lip. The game would consist of travelling through a series of purple locations, attempting to collect enough bumfluff to pass for the kid at school who had facial hair at the age of 11 and was hung like a Derby winner.

PRINCE NASEEM

A kind of hybrid of Parappa the Rapper and a rudimentary beat 'em up. Prince fights a series of largely unremarkable opponents in between talking absolute nonsense with a wide-eyed, gap-toothed grin. Extra points scored for the number of times you use the words 'wicked' and 'respeck'.

PRINCE CHARLES

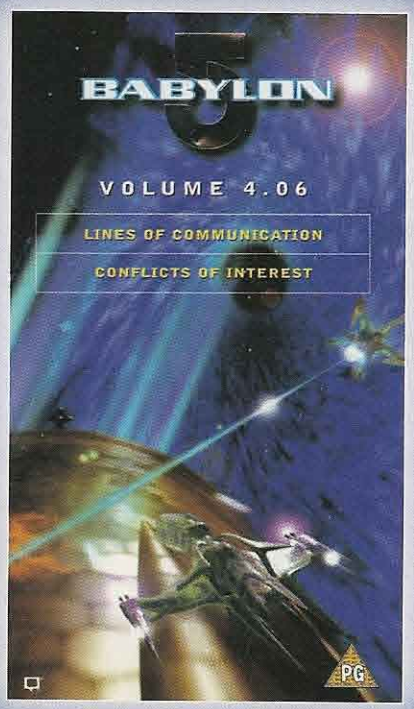
Some stuff about talking to plants and having big ears.

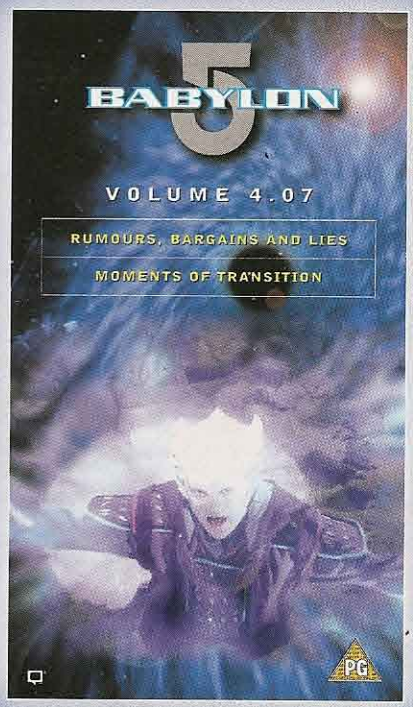
PRINCE ALBERT

Perhaps not.

HMV

a fight for peace





Babylon 5 - Volume 4.06

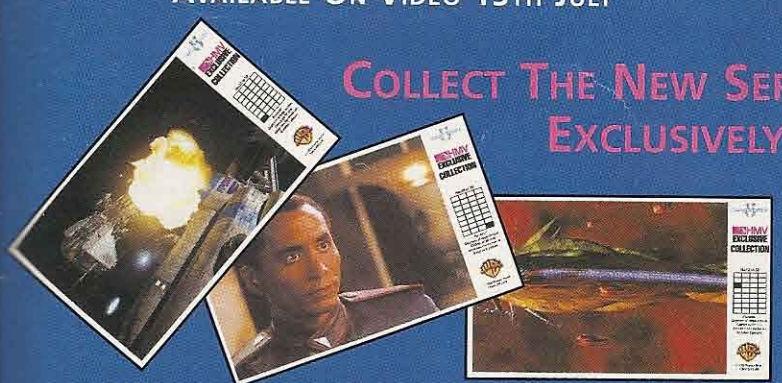
Although the Shadows have fled to the Rim, their dark Servants, the Drakh, remain. Delenn is tasked with eradicating them after they stage a series of attacks on unprotected ships. But a race armed with Shadow technology is a tough race to beat in combat... Elsewhere on Mars, can Marcus and Franklin succeed in convincing the Resistance to join Babylon 5?

Available On Video 13th July

Babylon 5 - Volume 4.07

The Civil Strife on Minbar reaches its climax when Delenn stakes her life by challenging the leader of the Warrior caste to participate in an ancient, deadly ritual with a fatal twist. Meanwhile, Earth cruisers have destroyed vessels carrying wounded civilians. An outraged Sheridan calls an emergency meeting of the League of Non-Aligned Worlds - it's time to fight back.

Available On Video 13th July



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DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

THE DETAILS

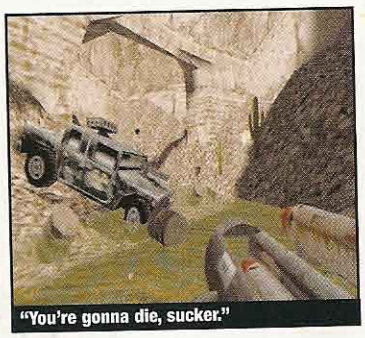
DEVELOPER 3D Realms Entertainment
PUBLISHER GT Interactive
OUT December '98
WEBSITE www.gtinteractive.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Expansive levels and fully interactive environments
- Uses the *Unreal* engine, so should look handsome

It's been two long years since *Duke Nukem*'s last violent escapade, and this highly anticipated sequel is long overdue. The previous incarnation, *Duke Nukem 3D*, prompted all manner of tedious *Duke* v *Quake* debates among those with, frankly, too much time on their hands. It was undoubtedly an excellent game though, and this follow-up was inevitable; although it has largely been shrouded in secrecy, with the exception of an often-used screenshot.

Details are still fairly thin on the ground, but we have ascertained that the titular gun-toting, cigar-chewing Aryan goes to Vegas to claim his crown, apparently dealing straight flushes of death to all comers and putting an end to Dr Proton's newest reign of terror. We have also been informed that Duke frags every alien and bags every babe. Which is nice. Expect further delays following the news that the developers have recently licensed the *Unreal* engine. PCZ


"You're gonna die, sucker."


Commando influences are obvious.


It looks even better than *Incoming*.

EXPENDABLE

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Rage
PUBLISHER Rage
OUT November '98
WEBSITE www.rage.co.uk

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Fast-moving, highly coloured 3D graphics bring an older style of gameplay back to the fore
- Simple directional control system

Considered by those who have played it as something of a re-working of the 1985 classic Capcom arcade game *Commando*, *Expendable* promises to continue Rage's role as the current 3D action game daddies. A fully playable version we encountered recently had simultaneous two-player action unfolding over a pseudo top-down landscape with a roving camera thrown in for good all-round effect, and it seemed to work like a treat. Using a scriptable animating particle engine, the developers have improved the quality and quantity of their explosions, while their highly tuned polygon engine knocks up the complex 3D landscapes. As usual, Rage are utilising every technological trick in the book (force feedback, Voodoo 2) to ensure that this actioner kicks it with the best of them. PCZ

DAIKATANA

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ion Storm
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
OUT December '98
WEBSITE www.eidosinteractive.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- *Quake*-style action with an RPG slant
- More weapons and monsters than you can shake an extremely large stick at

A hot contender for the throne occupied by *Quake 2*, *Daikatana*'s extended development period is ample proof of Ion Storm's commitment to making the best first-person shooter around. Beautiful game environments, multiple characters who work together against the common foe (ie roaming hordes of evil monsties), cool weapons and the expertise of John Romero (one of the men behind *Doom* and *Quake*) all suggest that *Daikatana* will be a force to contend with at the end of '98.



The game features four different time zones, each with their own weapons, characters and graphics. We anticipate a game that combines the hectic action of *Quake 2*, the inventive level design of *Jedi Knight* and the pure fun of *Duke Nukem 3D*. *PC Zone* readers will of course be the first to see the results of Ion Storms efforts when we run our exclusive review in December. PCZ



Lara's latest outing looks, er... a bit like her other two.

TOMB RAIDER 3

THE DETAILS

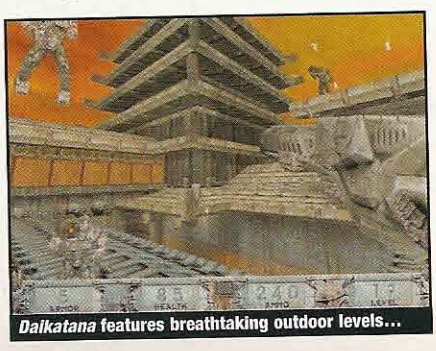
DEVELOPER Eidos Interactive
PUBLISHER Core Design
OUT Christmas (of course)
WEBSITE www.eidosinteractive.com

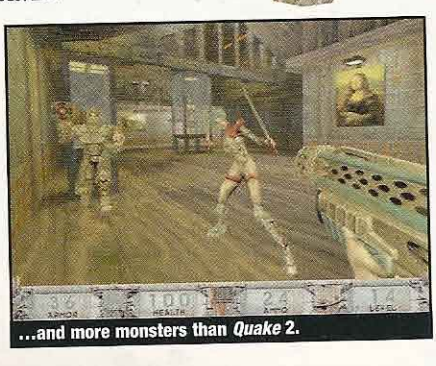
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

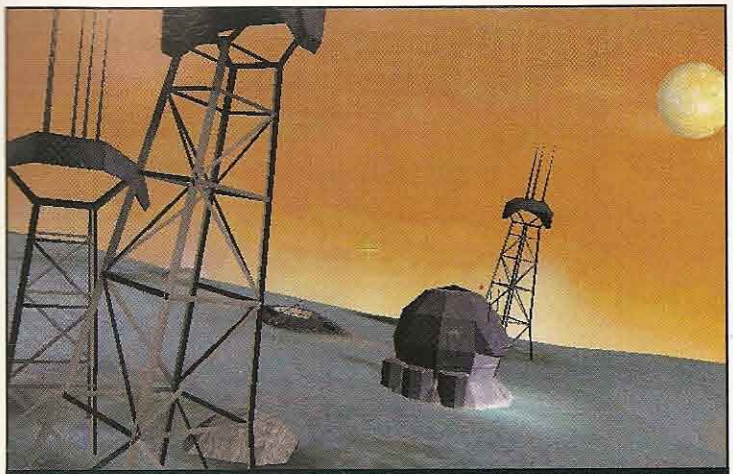
- Another potential blockbuster for everyone's favourite virtual pin-up
- Just don't expect anything remarkably different to last time

If Thom 'Radiohead' Yorke is reading this – and assuming he really wants "no surprises" – he'll be relieved to hear this piece of 'news': with the concrete inevitability of night following day, Eidos used the recent E³ show as a platform to announce *Tomb Raider 3*, the third (in case you hadn't guessed) outing for the multi-talented Ms Lara Croft (which was surely cause for celebration among the corporate accountants). Expect new moves, enemies, weapons and locations, and doubtless a few more revealing costumes for the curvaceous heroine.

Explicit details are thin on the ground at present, but it has to be said that what was shown (while clearly at a very early stage of development) doesn't look remarkably different to Lara's two previous excursions. Still, if it ain't broke... eh? PCZ


Daikatana features breathtaking outdoor levels...


...and more monsters than *Quake* 2.



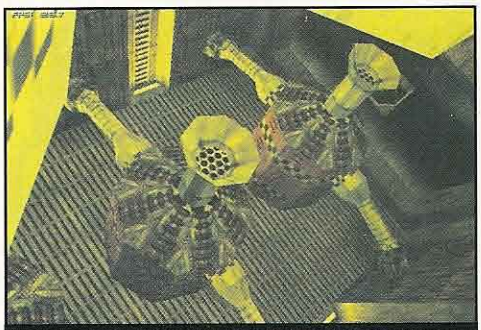
The 18 missions will be a lot more scripted, with up to six goals that must be achieved. New areas of a particular level will become accessible as you work your way through – *Mario64*-style.



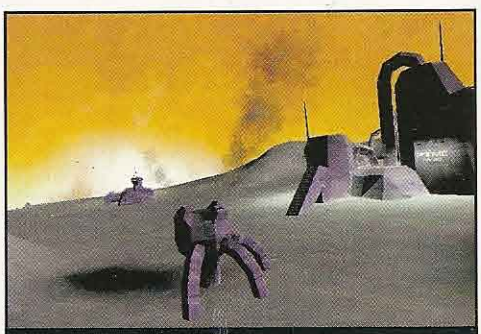
The lush graphics look great, and we can expect some awesome graphical effects such as localised fogging, smoke, coloured lighting and procedural texturing – but you'll need at least a P200 with a 3D card to run the game.



This time round, the scale is much different – the levels are much bigger so the ships are much faster.



There's a panic button which rights the craft. Handy if you get hit or stuck in a corner and become disorientated.



Outrage are making much of their new AI routines and claim you'll have to outsmart the 25 new bots to kill them.

DESCENT III

PC ZONE TIP FOR THE TOP

Hot on the heels of *Forsaken* is the original tunnel-buster. We discover why *Descent III* takes tunnel scuttling to the next level

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Outrage Entertainment
PUBLISHER Interplay
OUT October '98
WEBSITE www.outrage.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- The original *Descent* games were the only real alternative 3D shooters to the likes of *Doom* and *Quake*
- The inclusion of outside environments as well as tunnels should greatly enhance gameplay and strategy
- If the two previous games were anything to go by, we're in for a real multiplayer treat

The first thing you'll notice about *Descent III* is that this time round the action isn't confined to the claustrophobic twisting tunnels of the first two games. This, along with the fact that it sports a super new 3D game engine that enables more detailed geometry, means that in terms of technology and potential it's leaps ahead of *Descent II*.

Since *Descent II* was released over two years ago there have been many pretenders to its throne, most recently the graphical fest *Forsaken* (*PCZ* #63, 94%). Do developers Outrage (part of the original Parallax team who wrote the *Descent* games) feel they have anything to prove?

"*Forsaken* is very pretty. I only really played the demo though, and I didn't want to play any more," maintains Executive Producer Alan Pavlish. "We're going to be more subtle. We're paying more attention to the game and going for realism. We don't want it looking like a circus, with a green light here, a red light there and a yellow light here.

"On a technical level, *Descent III* is far superior, but where we're really gonna hit *Forsaken* is with our AI and our robots. We're gonna make it feel like you're actually fighting humans, not the CPU. You'll also have to come up with different strategies depending on your environment. If you're outside, for example, you'll have to come up with a whole new strategy to beat the enemy, and use different weapons than if you were operating in the close confines of a tunnel."

The fact you can now fly outside has meant Outrage have had to develop two different 3D engines and meld them together, which is no mean feat. The results are pretty seamless, with minimum pop-up and a high level of detail. But then we'd really expect nothing less from a game that requires a 3D card.

The tunnels are more organic and less square than before, and outside there's plenty in the way of cover, such as tress, small hills and rocks. There'll also be wind and rain effects and heaps of ambient stuff to set atmosphere.



The automap stops you getting lost.

Other new features include heaps of cool new weaponry, such as napalm rockets, bees (?) and frag missiles, three new upgradeable ships, and as well as the good old 'Guide Bot' there's also a 'Thief Bot' that you can send after a player with the order to steal a certain weapon.

"It's gonna be great for multiplayer," chuckles Pavlish. "You're sitting round the corner, bouncing grenades off the wall at your opponent, and this little guy flies up and steals your weapon!"

Descent III will no doubt provide welcome relief to the numerous *Quake*-clones due to hit the shelves this Christmas. PCZ

YOU MEAN YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED DESCENT?

***Descent* (*PCZ* #25, 94%) and *Descent II* (*PCZ* #37, 90%) were for a long time the only real alternatives to *Doom* (*PCZ* #13, 96%), *Doom II* (*PCZ* #20, 90%) and *Quake* (*PCZ* #43, 96%). Unlike other 3D first-person shooters, they added an extra dimension (you could move up and down) and a compulsive 'seek, destroy and leg it' mission structure. While some were frustrated by the control system (the freedom of the extra dimension meant that in the heat of battle it was easy to find yourself stuck upside-down in a corner) and the tunnel-based, maze-like level design, many found the extra dimension and exploratory elements an ideal alternative.**

MESSIAH

PCZONE TIP FOR THE TOP

The first shots of *Messiah* set pulses racing all over the Internet, as well as in the *Zone* office. We tracked down Shiny's Dave Perry at his Laguna Beach HQ to see exactly what all the fuss was about

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Shiny Entertainment
PUBLISHER Interplay
OUT December '98
WEBSITE www.shiny.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- It uses ground-breaking 3D technology for perfectly scaleable characters that are more detailed the more powerful your machine
- You can get inside people's bodies and make them break their legs
- You won't necessarily need a 3D accelerator card
- It's one of the most original games we've ever seen

There are already massive expectations surrounding Shiny Entertainment's first new game since *MDK* (*PCZ* #50, 90%). Never one to shun publicity, Shiny's main man Dave Perry is understandably very excited about his latest project. In fact, if there was a donkey with us right now it probably wouldn't have any hind legs at all.

"There's already been a lot of talk about *Messiah* and we've got burnt a little bit already by the press over here in the US," he explains. "People thought we'd gone a bit crazy. I mean, we're doing a game where each character is made up of half a million polygons. The main character is a baby – but not just a baby, a chubby, waddling angel.

"Our technology really is two years ahead of anything else out there at the moment. You've gotta admit, it all sounds just a bit too weird. And then we tell people a bit more and they start to understand what we're doing and they think it's actually pretty cool.

"There might not be any weapons in the normal sense, but you actually get to possess people and you can make them do really crazy things."

It certainly is a bit of a weird concept, and something that Perry – for once – isn't too keen to talk about. "It's still at that stage where we haven't really decided yet," he says. "Basically, you assume the role of a 'good' angel – we've called him Bob – who's sent down to the planet to thwart a plot by the Devil to unleash Armageddon on an unsuspecting Earth and therefore gain an advantage over the forces of God. Your overall goal is to find Satan and rid him from the planet. The trouble is, like you, he can jump into other people's bodies and control them, so finding him isn't going to be easy."

So where did the initial idea come from?

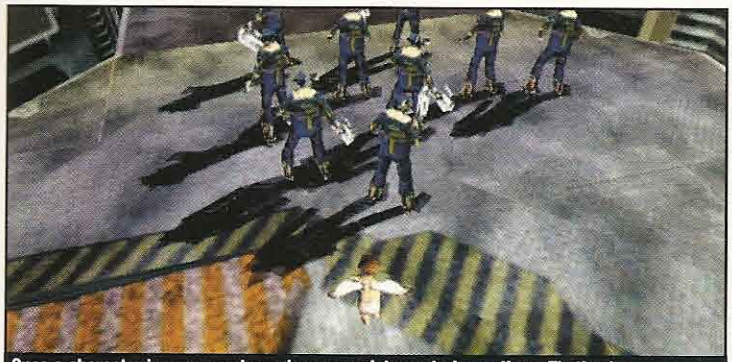
"We wanted to do something exciting and fresh," beams Perry. "I need something to get me out of bed in the morning. *Messiah* isn't just another *Quake*-style shooter – it's different, dark and totally 3D.

"We're a totally 3D company now. We're also really concerned that so many games are 3D accelerator card-only now. You're really cutting down on your audience if you go down that road. According to our own research – stuff we've been doing



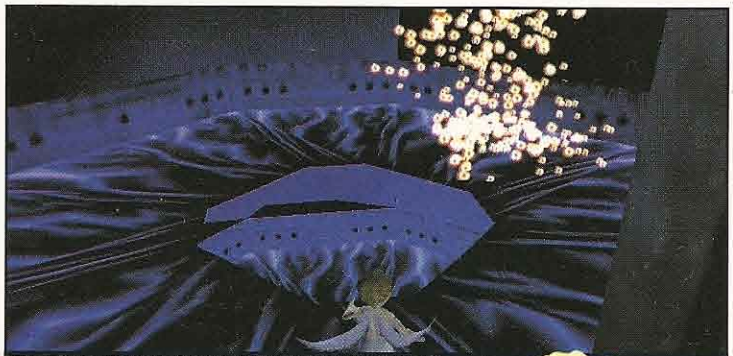


Shiny will be licensing the *Messiah* engine, so expect developers to form a queue stretching to Mexico.


Once a character is possessed, you have complete control over them. That's nice.


Shiny obviously couldn't use a baby for the motion capture, so they used a midget instead.


Although more than 200 of the 400 levels have been designed, there's little gameplay yet.


The game will run in Shiny's familiar 'letterbox' format.

on our website – only one in eight people have a 3D accelerator card. We're very committed to developing games that run in software and hardware. That's the real challenge – developing a technology everyone can use."

So what's so special about this new engine and how exactly does it work? Unsurprisingly, Perry isn't too keen to go into any real detail;



not that the average PC games player in the street would understand anyway.

"It's actually a very simple concept," he claims. "You've just got to approach the problem in a new way and think differently. The problem with current systems and games is that the more stuff you've got on screen, the greater the strain on your system. We've come up with a way to stop that from happening."

Okay, we're all ears. Just give us a bit of a clue, for Chrissakes!

"Well, you know how your word processor stores all the fonts you use on your PC? [nodding heads all round]. Well, it doesn't actually store each pixel – that's the way they used to do it – it stores the shape and then, depending on what point size you want, it scales it up or down. We've taken that idea and transposed it to 3D.

"The result is that we've developed an engine that can handle a lot of detail, and it's completely scaleable. We tell it what shape the models are and other information – such as the skeleton, muscles and skin – and then, depending on what machine you're running or whether or not you have a 3D card, it works out what to draw on screen.

"We actually design each character in about 500,000 polygons – now bear in mind that each character in *MDK* used about 150 to 300 polygons per model – and then we scale them back from there, depending on your hardware.

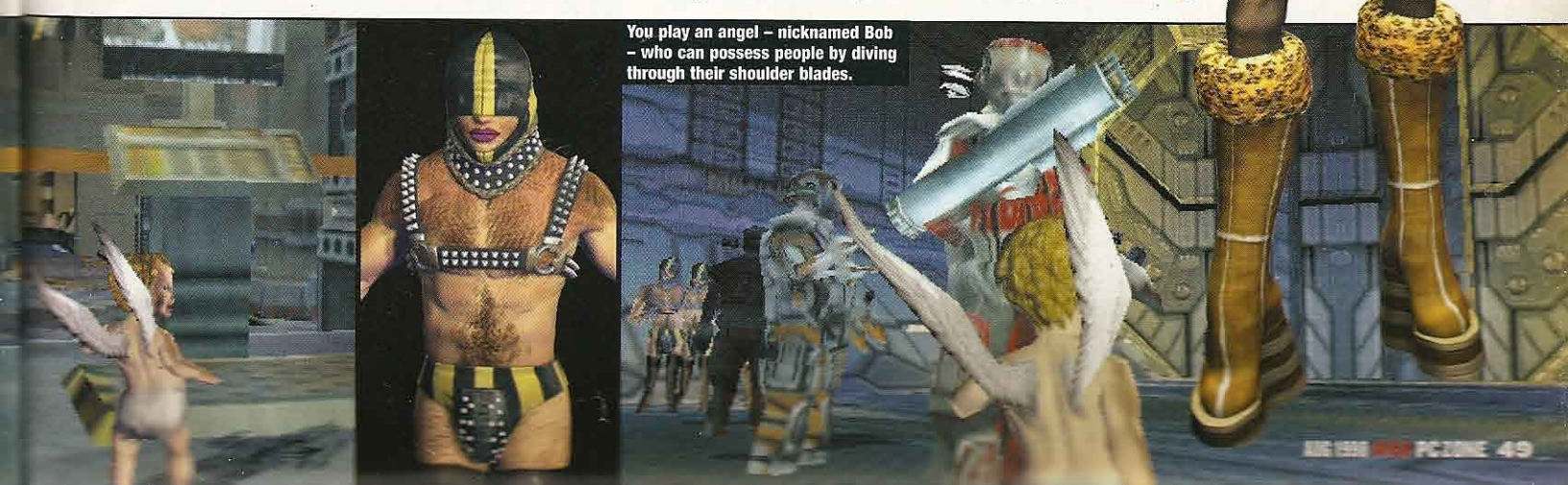
"The trick is that we compress the data and store it as a shape, and then take out or add polygons in real time. Because of the way it works, the frame rate will stay constant throughout. You can even type in the frame rate you want and it will just lose polygons to compensate. We're actually creating real-time tessellated worlds. It's given us a lot of freedom to design and create a very cool game. At the end of the day, we're not interested in designing an engine, we're interested in designing a great game, and our new engine allows us to do that."

"You can be as bad as you like. You can possess a character, make him leap off a ledge and break his legs, then force him to keep crawling in agony. You control him"

– DAVE PERRY, HEAD HONCHO, SHINY ENTERTAINMENT

When you see the game running, it's clear that what Shiny have is very little short of amazing. The character detail is unprecedented, and according to lead programmer Michael 'Sax' Persson, you'll be able to have up to 20 characters on screen at one time without any noticeable slowdown.

"We can simply change anything we like in real time. There's no fogging, so you get a very high perspective, and there's no clipping or pop-up. We can even have movies running on video screens within the game, as well as


You play an angel – nicknamed Bob – who can possess people by diving through their shoulder blades.

real-time distortion and shadows," Sax claims.

As he guides one of the characters featured in the game – a scantily clad prostitute – through an early level, Sax demonstrates how the volumetric lighting works. "In other games with real-time lighting, the shadows don't actually work properly – a character is either lit up or they aren't. Our engine allows us to light individual parts of a character or object, so if a character's arm is not in a shadow you'll be able to see it.

"And that's just one of the really cool things about *Messiah*," Perry chips in. "This engine just breeds creativity – the game starts to design itself. That's the definition of a good game. We've only just started throwing ideas around, but now when you kill someone, hiding the body will be a big issue. There's a huge lump of strategy in there for the player. Remember, you're a baby angel – although you're very powerful, you're actually very vulnerable. You've gotta be careful who you kill and where or you'll be discovered, and then things could start to get very messy."

There's no denying that the technology is amazing, but what about the game? What exactly do you have to do in *Messiah*?

Well, for starters you don't pick up weapons à la *Quake*. You possess people by diving through their shoulder blades. This means you have to get behind them, so you're going to need a strategy. You've got to create a diversion, and you can only fly around for short distances at a time. Just look at those little wings and expansive gut. *Messiah* uses real-time physics, remember.

Once you're inside someone, however, you can control them completely. If they have a weapon, you can use it. But the real fun comes from getting other characters to do your dirty work for you.

"You're gonna see a lot of very hurt people in this game," quips Perry, with a demonic smile. "You can be as bad as you like. If you need to get past a guard, you can possess him, make him leap off a ledge and break his legs, then force him to keep on walking or crawling. He'll be screaming in agony, but you are controlling him. Just make sure you leap out before he dies, otherwise you die.

"Essentially, the player can do whatever they want. We haven't really decided on the specifics yet, but we're having new ideas for levels and puzzles all the time. There are going to be 400 areas altogether – *MDK* had 60 – and around 35 characters. They will be able to communicate with each other and they'll all have their own agenda. If you use their bodies, you'll have to play by their rules or be discovered. We're creating a realistically populated world that the player can interact with and be very bad."

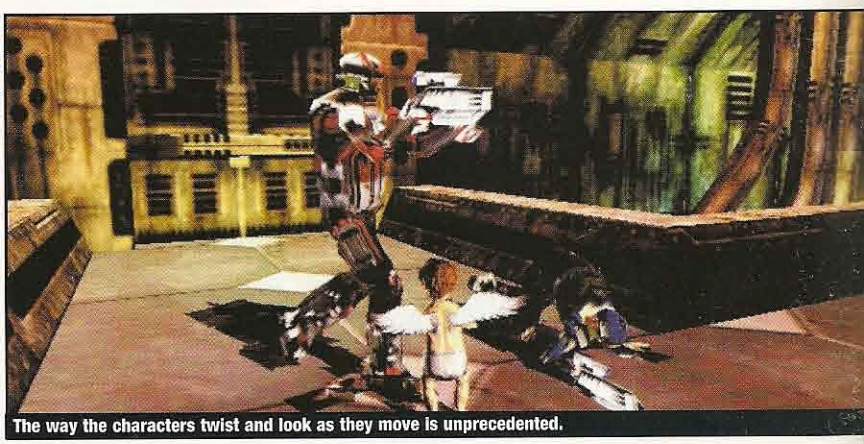
It's clear that Shiny are in the process of producing something very special indeed. The technology is undoubtedly very impressive, but as yet there's no evidence of what the actual game will be like. So far, though, the signs are good. If *Messiah* manages to live up to the massive expectations surrounding it, and Shiny can really deliver what they're promising, there will be a lot of happy, sick and twisted PC gamers out there come Christmas. Here's hoping. PCZ



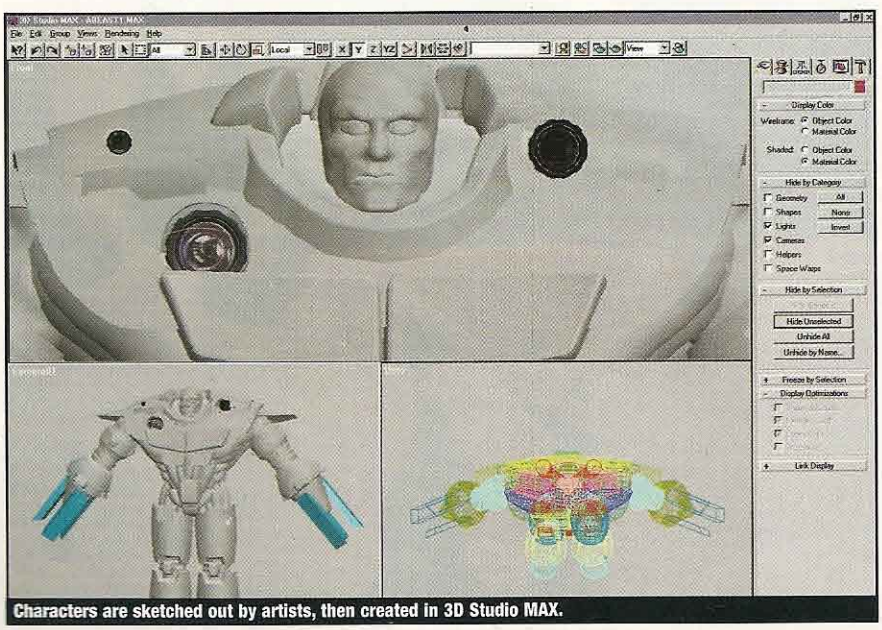
As much of the emphasis will be on stealth as it is on combat.



The game may not need a 3D card, but with so much going on, we can possibly expect high RAM requirements.



The way the characters twist and look as they move is unprecedented.



Characters are sketched out by artists, then created in 3D Studio MAX.



The 35 characters are made up of over half a million polygons.



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THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT


Conventional weapons such as this bow feature heavily.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Looking Glass
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
OUT November '98
WEBSITE www.eidosinteractive.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Atmospheric and unusual 3D shooter
- Developed by the *Ultima Underworld* team

This promises to be a first-person shooter with a difference, the emphasis being on stealth and thievery as opposed to running around the place at the speed of light, mindlessly blasting everything you come across. The introduction of this tactical element should inject a much needed breath of fresh air into a genre that seems to have become obsessed with 'emulating' *Quake 2*'s every element or ripping off *Q2* "lock, stock and barrel", as our man Mallo would have it.



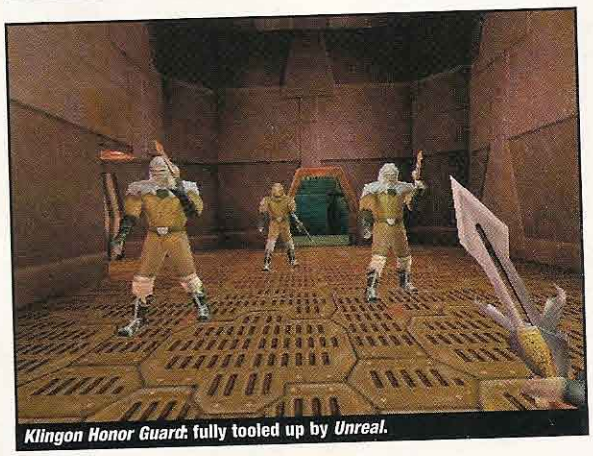
Thief is the first game to use the *Dark* engine, which the game's designers claim is extremely versatile, enabling them to create a fluid, ever-changing environment, unlike what could be done using more conventional game engines.

Objects in the game have real physics, with flammable objects catching fire and heavy objects having real mass, enabling you to use them for blocking doors, or throwing at people if you get bored. Considering *Thief* is being developed by Looking Glass (the people behind *Ultima Underworld* and *System Shock*), there is every reason to get incredibly excited about this game. PCZ

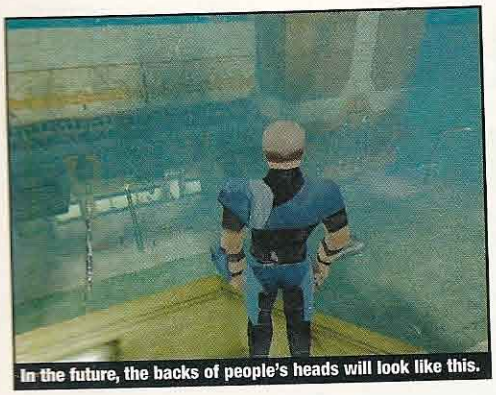

"Drop your pants, big boy."

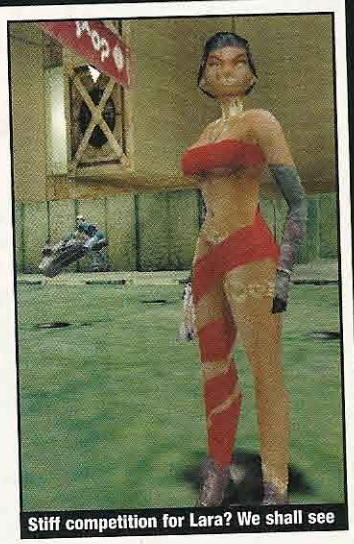





Klingon Honor Guard: fully tooled up by *Unreal*.

OMIKRON


In the future, the backs of people's heads will look like this.


Stiff competition for Lara? We shall see

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Quantic Dream
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
OUT November '98
WEBSITE www.eidosinteractive.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Huge open-ended 3D environment
- Control many different characters within the game

An action/adventure game with a difference, *Omikron*'s use of 'virtual reincarnation' gives you the ability to move directly into the body of the last character you touched before dying. Early shots hint at *Tomb Raider*-style gameplay, although the ability to control different characters should make for a less linear game than Core's classic.

The adventure takes place in the city of Omikron, and the futuristic environment that provides the backdrop for the game is promised to be highly detailed and bustling with passers by and vehicles, and you will be given complete freedom to move around the city in any way you choose. In-game characters should look pretty impressive too, thanks to facial motion-capture in real-time for extra realism. With hi-res 640x480 visuals in 65,000 colours, gourad shading and real-time lights and shadows, this promising new title from Eidos is bound to impress when it arrives later this year. PCZ

KLINGON: HONOR GUARD

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER MicroProse
PUBLISHER MicroProse
OUT September '98
WEBSITE www.microprose.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

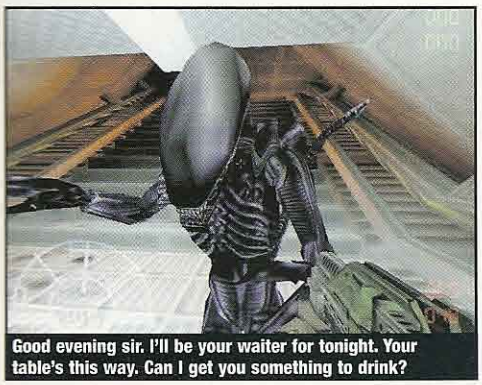
- Klingons are more interesting than wimpy humans in tights
- The *Unreal* engine can turn backflips on a powerful PC

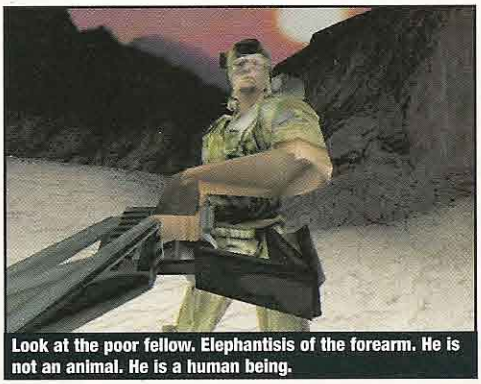
Recreating the look and feel of the Klingon Empire from the popular Paramount TV series *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Klingon: Honor Guard* has been described by some as an action mystery adventure set in a fully operational 3D alien world.

Klingon: Honor Guard plunges you into a dangerous quest to save the Klingon Empire and the life of its leader, Gowron. Featuring seven unique 3D worlds spread over more than 20 huge levels (including space stations, starships and alien cities), the game offers an extremely rich combat environment all lovingly modeled using Epic's awesome *Unreal* 3D engine.

You'll be able to use recognisable Klingon artefacts such as the vicious d'k tahg daggar, or more conventional weaponry. In total there will be ten weapons to choose from, six of which were created specially for this game. Veteran voice actors are also getting involved, so that characters encountered in the game will sound like their TV counterparts. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* fans – spooge cannons at the ready... PCZ

ALIENS vs PREDATOR


Good evening sir. I'll be your waiter for tonight. Your table's this way. Can I get you something to drink?


Look at the poor fellow. Elephantisis of the forearm. He is not an animal. He is a human being.


The surviving member of Milli Vanilli, wearing a special 'mourning mask' yesterday.

PC ZONE TIP FOR THE TOP

When two tribes go to war, one is all that you can score. This game's got three tribes

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Rebellion
PUBLISHER Fox Interactive
OUT October 1998
WEBSITE www.fox-interactive.com

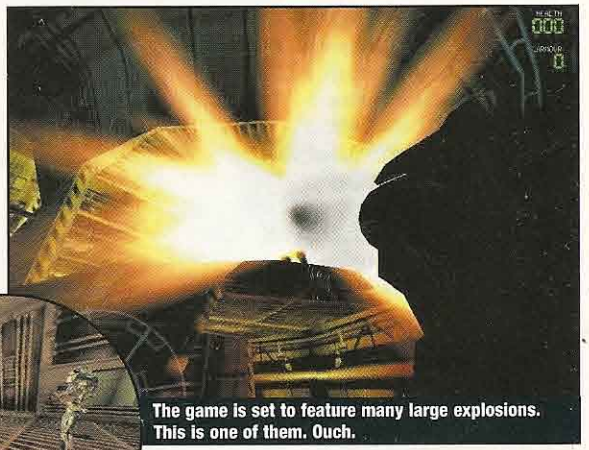
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Interesting twist on the 3D shoot 'em up genre
- Indulge all your extra-terrestrial fantasies in one fell swoop
- Colour graphics
- And sound

The war of the *Quake* clones is getting so unbearably crowded that it helps to have a gimmick if you want to stand out. Here's a killer: *Aliens Vs Predator* – two classic movie monster licenses tossed into a single bearpit.

It's not the first time that this combination of cinematic nasties has been utilised in a computer game. Aliens Vs Predator is an unofficial sequel to the Atari Jaguar game of the same name which first surfaced several years ago to wild acclaim and, in some cases, unfettered screaming. While the game came too late to save the unfortunate Jaguar system, the modern PC update is set to arrive in time for the wallet-emptying carnival called Xmas.

Aliens Vs Predator is set in a military base on a far-flung planet at the very edge of the universe, where a series of biological warfare experiments have gone decidedly pear-shaped. A gang of aliens – which were being bred for shady and nefarious purposes – have escaped. It's gory bedlam down there, and you're in the thick of it.


The game is set to feature many large explosions. This is one of them. Ouch.

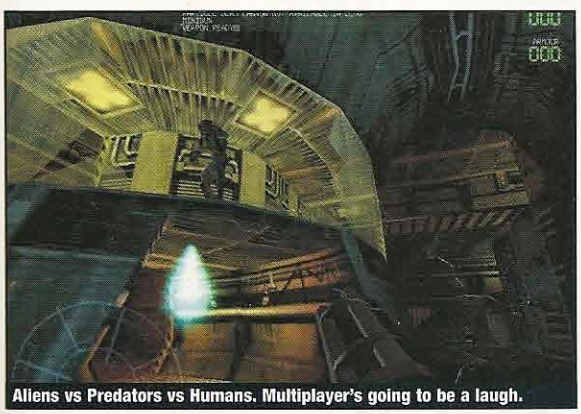
Aside from the recognisable license, *Aliens Vs Predator*'s main selling point is its sheer variety of gameplay. You can play as Mister Metal Fangs (the Alien), Mister Invisible (the Predator) or Mister Game-Over-Man (the human marine), with the entire game altering dramatically depending on your choice.

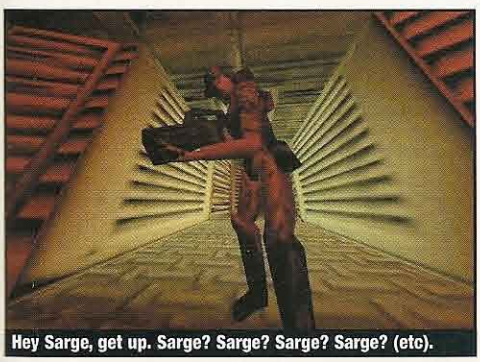
Play as the Alien, for instance, and you're in for plenty of xenomorphic unpleasantness. You'll be able to gob acid at people and watch their skin droop off and drip all over the floor like so much displaced pizza topping. You can run around at a terrifying pace, scaling walls and ceilings in the blink of an eye, and use your 'magic' extra-terrestrial senses to hunt down the enemy.

The Predator's goal is more complex. Released from a captured scout ship, your task is to track down your fellow detainees and either rescue them… or avenge their deaths (the latter option being the 'funnest' one). Infra-red vision and the famous 'invisi-shield' thingumajig should aid your quest, along with an ever-expanding arsenal of really nasty things to throw at people.

Brave souls who choose to play as the human marine are in for an exercise in survival. Your mission is to avoid being torn limb from limb, melted to a pile of goo, or shot in the nose by a bloody big gun. That's the downside. The upside is the lovingly tooled military accessories at hand: shotguns, plasma guns, pulse rifles and, best of all, authentic-looking flame-throwers.

It's going to be an orgy of unrelenting horror, in other words. Having witnessed it in action, we can report it's also an orgy of unrelenting high-resolution, maximum-frame-rated, spangly-lighting-effect-laden visual lushness. Multiplayer deathmatch, in particular, promises to be a scream. PCZ

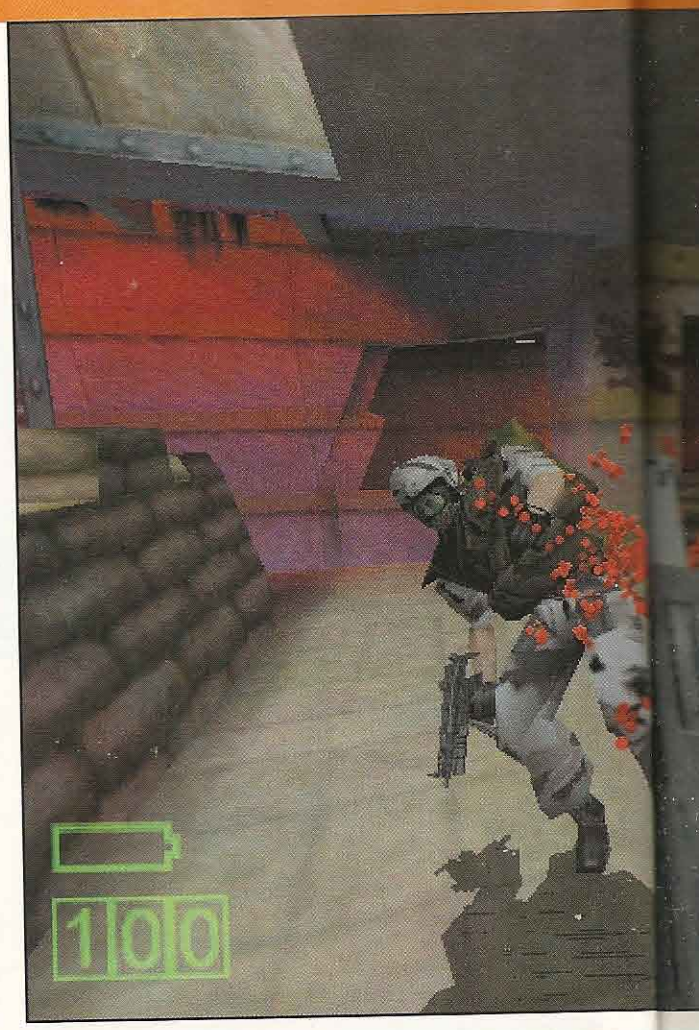

Aliens vs Predators vs Humans. Multiplayer's going to be a laugh.


Hey Sarge, get up. Sarge? Sarge? Sarge? Sarge? (etc).


Frying tonight: crispy batter Predator.


Oh, what a feelin'... when we're prancing from the ceilin'...

HALF LIFE



THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Valve Software
PUBLISHER Sierra
OUT October '98
WEBSITE www.sierra.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Proper unfolding storyline
- Clever monsters with sense of smell
- Neat effects, scenes, and attention to detail
- Looks fantastic

PC ZONE TIP FOR THE TOP

Yeah, yeah, another 3D shoot 'em up to join those other *Quake*-engine games. But wait, this one looks really different...

You know the drill: you enter the dark, scary cavern and there are four monsters there, looking the other way. You ready the rocket launcher... Bam! One dead. Quickly switching to the railgun, you strafe and pop another as they react dumbly. Backing away down the corridor, you pop a few grenades in your path and the two remaining monsters blindly stumble forward, splattering against the walls as the two pineapples do their job. Finish up, save, and move onto the next room...

Such is the 3D shooter. Despite all the pretensions of storyline, nonlinearaility and 'hubs', the *Quake* clone's gameplay is still just a combination of raw predictability and plodding drama. There's little challenge or development. You use the same skills over and over again: "Ooh, look, I can circle-strafe and look up and down while shooting up into the air." Bang! Another monster fit only for a body bag.

Except *Half Life* does it differently. And it may well span the genre and bring all those currently nestling in real-time strategy and role-playing and Internet porn back to the fold.

"When we started working on the game, we really felt that the action genre was in a rut," says Gabe Newell, head of Valve. "The gameplay was becoming more and more minimalist – running through spaces that you didn't care about and that didn't do anything, to shoot a bunch of monsters you had already killed 50 times before."

So the 40 or so Valve boys' mandate was to create a richer experience, a better game; something which bent the rules of the genre.

First came the story. The man responsible for the storyline is Marc Laidlaw, a 'proper' sci-fi novelist and writer. He penned an article on id Software and *Quake* for *Wired* and caught the 3D shooter bug in the process.

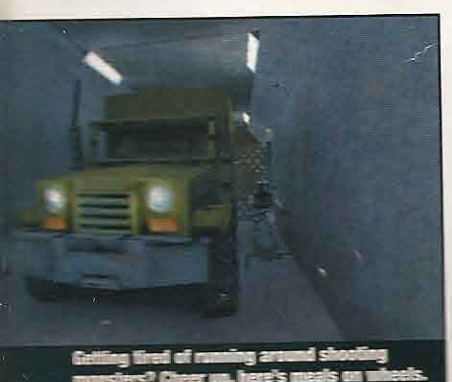
"The part that really grabbed me was level design," he says. "The no-clipped, God's-eye views you got of new worlds in process... complex areas that just dropped off into a void... It was irresistible."

Laidlaw quickly got into level designing, borrowing tips from the id guys and aiming for an opportunity to meld storytelling and new technology into one cohesive ball of playable nonsense. Getting involved with the genre-busting *Half Life* was a good opportunity, and the influence of a keen narrator really shows through.

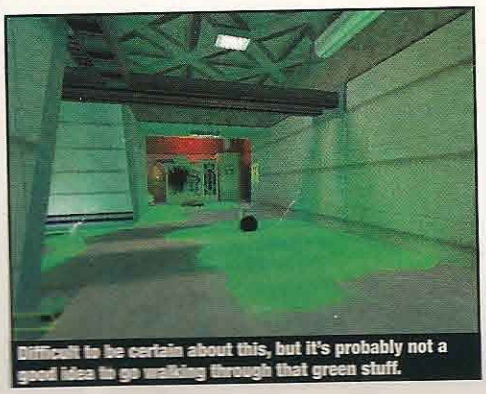
"There are lots of scripted sequences, and characters who are really immersed in the story that's unfolding around them," explains Laidlaw. "And keeping in mind that, from their point of view, it's total chaos and horror, and only you, Gordon Freeman, really get the full picture of what's going on."

The game has shades of zombie films, '50s B-movie horrors and *The Bill* as it pulls you

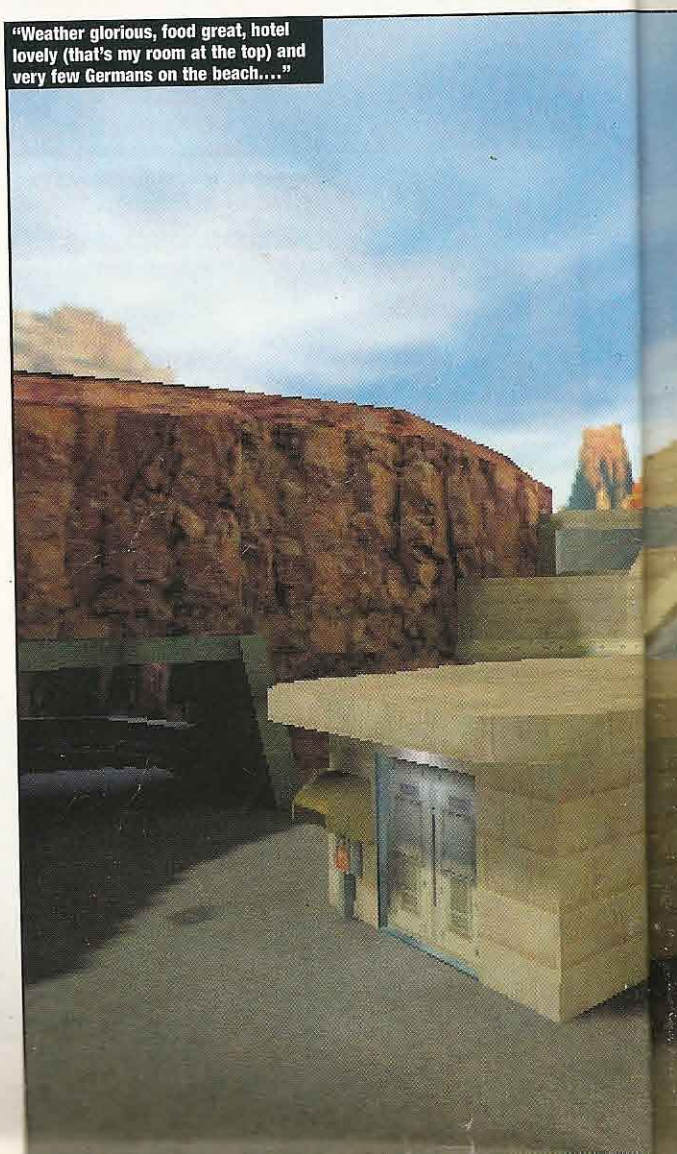




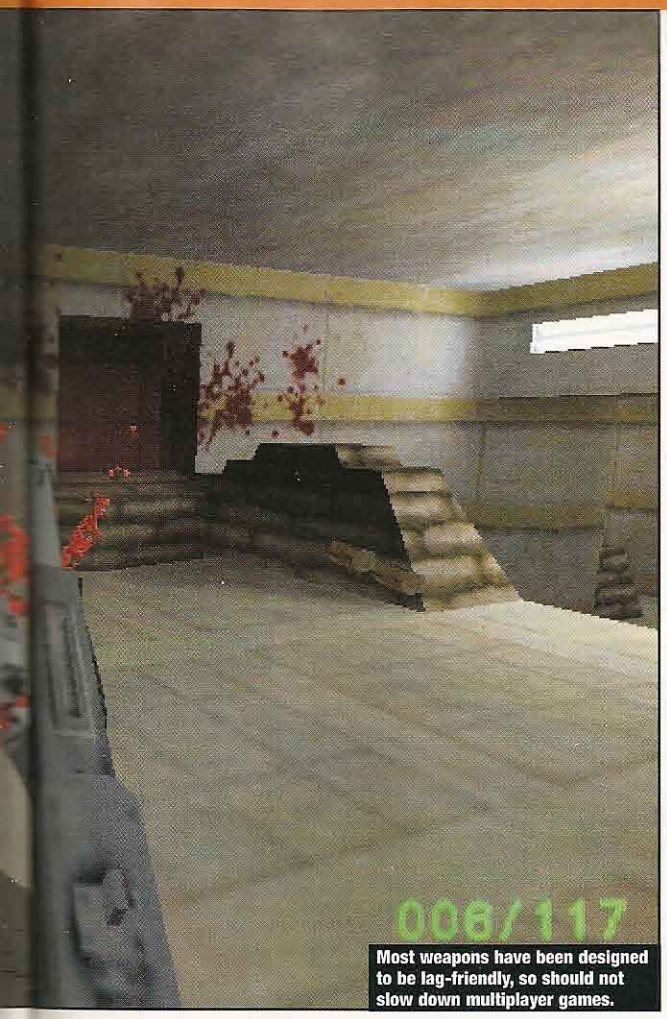
Getting tired of running around shooting monsters? Cheer up, here's meals on wheels.



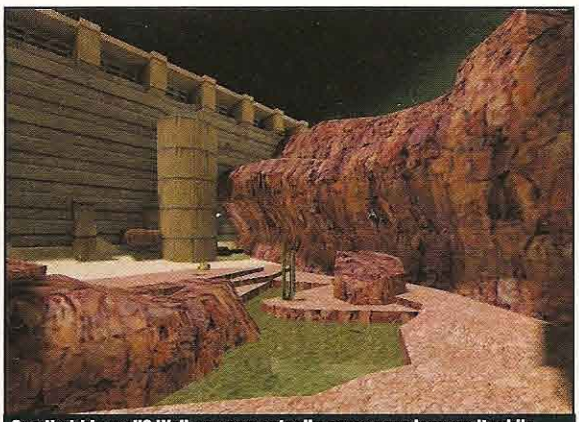
Difficult to be certain about this, but it's probably not a good idea to go walking through that green stuff.



"Weather glorious, food great, hotel lovely (that's my room at the top) and very few Germans on the beach...."

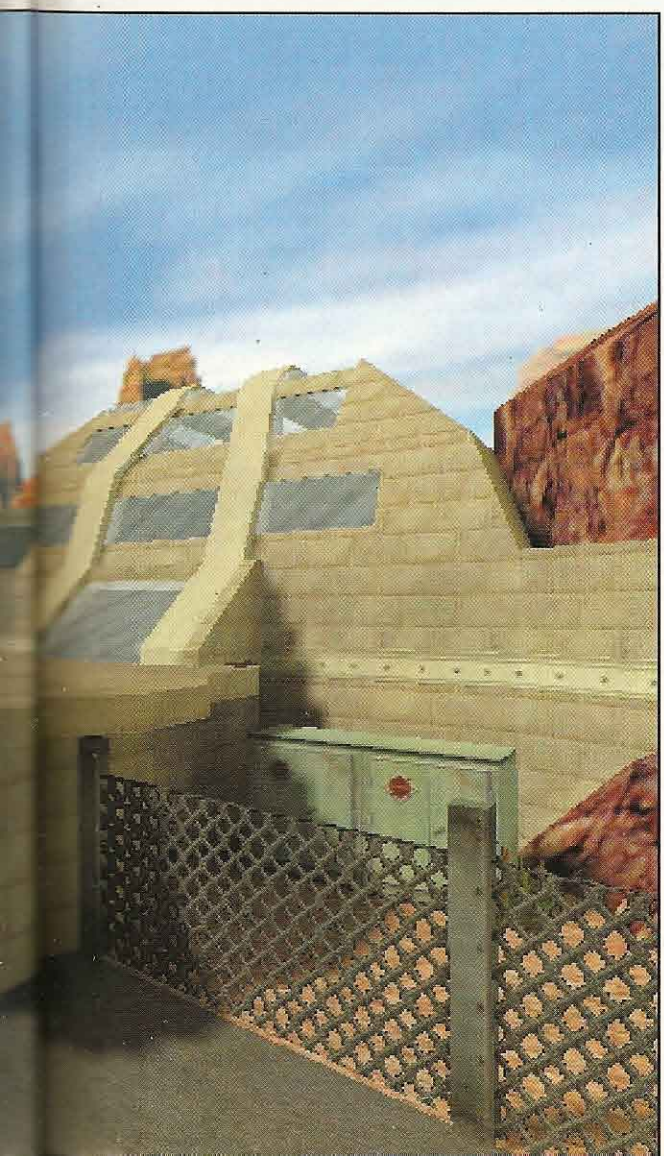


Most weapons have been designed to be lag-friendly, so should not slow down multiplayer games.


See that big wall? Well you can actually spray your logo on it while you're playing.



I'll bet he drinks Strongbow.



"We use the sky effect to create the illusion that you are in fact in a real world, with mountains and desert in the distance"

DARIO CASALI, LEVEL DESIGNER

into an unfolding surburban nightmare, throwing deserted tower blocks, research laboratories, hidden bases and loads of other 'real world' locales. The idea is not to fart around through a bunch of 'hubs', but instead to make a path for yourself through the game.

Unfortunately the monsters are out to do the same. They know the levels as well as you do and they work in groups. The little SWAT team members use cover, run away and dart round corners to toss hand grenades. "And some of them hate each other more than they hate you," says Gabe. "And if you are smart you can use that to your advantage."

The slimy alien scum also come with rudimentary senses – sight, hearing and smell. Then there's a conversational system which enables you and the other characters to interact, either to tell you what's going on or to act out some pre-scripted storytelling scene, some of which can actually be extremely entertaining.

"In just about every room you go into, something will be going on," says Laidlaw, "whether it's seeing someone being pulled into a vent by a tentacle, or two monsters fighting over the body of a scientist, or some new piece of equipment you can operate".

"There are non-player characters (NPCs) in the game who will actually talk to you and respond to what you're doing," according to Newell. "They will travel with you, fight with you, talk about the world around you, heal you and get you into places you couldn't get into on your own."

Originally due in November '97, *Half Life*, like the rest of the 3D shooters queuing up to be released, has been delayed. The quality of *Quake II* shifted the goalposts somewhat, and Valve faced the choice of sticking to their design manifesto or meeting their publisher's product schedule and their first quarter spend. In the end they did what you would hope, and went for quality.

"Since Mike Harrington [other Valve bossman] and I don't get paid until we ship, we are certainly looking forward to getting *Half Life* into the stores," says Gabe.

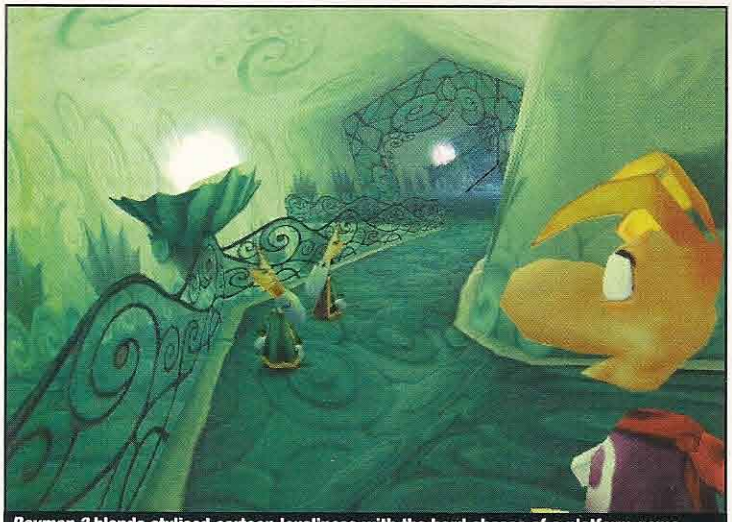
Multiplayer-wise, *Half Life* has a smattering of small surprises. Valve are going for a standard 32-player LAN or Internet option, but with an integrated pager system so you can locate your multiplayer 'pals' no matter which far-flung server they're ransacking. Skins and patches on servers will download automatically. And the most asked for multiplayer feature – putting your face on the player character – is now seamlessly possible (oh, and you can spray your clan logo on walls while you're playing).

But what of the most important element of any 3D shooter – the levels?

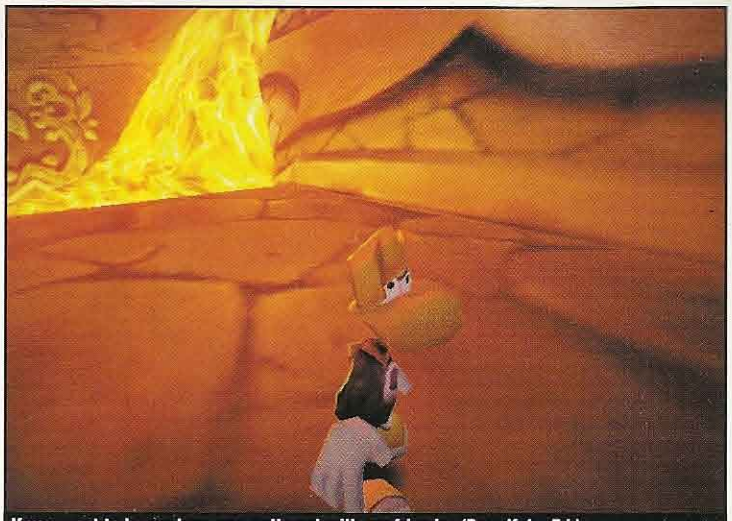
"*Half Life*'s levels are all seamlessly linked so that you hardly notice when the transition between levels occurs," says Brit boy level designer Dario Casali. "You can move either way over the transitions, meaning you can revisit earlier levels. Monsters will pursue you over transitions, as well as any projectiles you have fired. *Half Life* is practically one very large level with a couple of exceptions." (Ah, the old 'balancing action with exploration' ploy.)

Overall, however, *Half Life* looks strong. Very strong. It's definitely the current leader in the 'Game Most Likely To Out-*Quake* *Quake*' raffle, and a strong contender for this year's 'Go Away For Two Weeks Honey, Me And My Voodoo II Have Got Some Lovin' To Do' competition. PZ





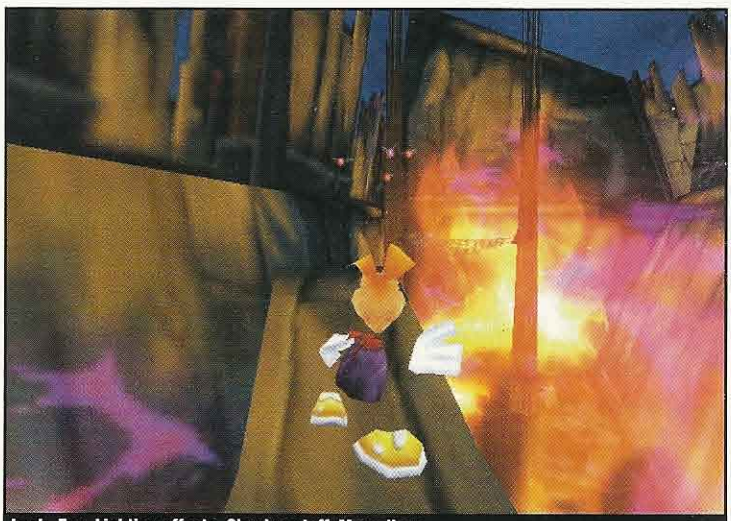
Rayman 2 blends stylised cartoon loveliness with the hard cheese of a platform game.



If you want to be my lava, you gotta get with my friends. *(Dreadful – Ed.)*



Lovely spot for a picnic. If this were real. Which it isn't. It's a game.



Look. Fog. Lighting effects. Glowing stuff. Marvellous.

RAYMAN 2



PC ZONE TIP FOR THE TOP

The original *Rayman* was a console success back in 1995. For the sequel, Ubisoft have plunged the eponymous hero head first into the third dimension – and the result is a potential *Mario 64*-beater



THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ubisoft
PUBLISHER Ubisoft
OUT November '98
WEBSITE www.ubisoft.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

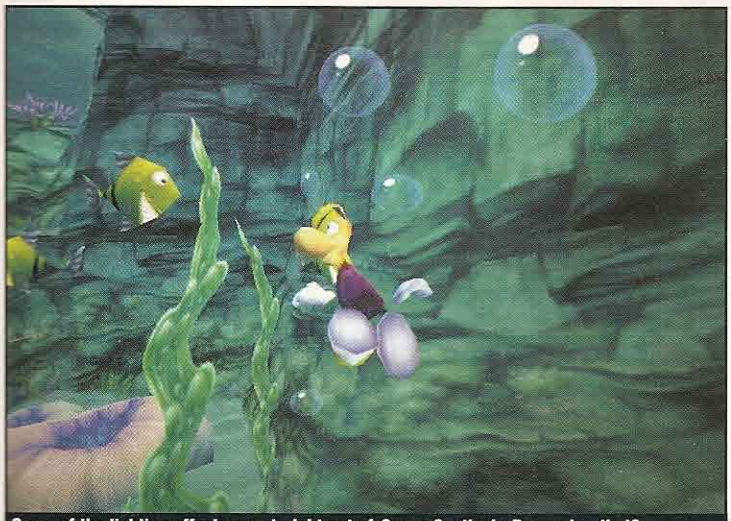
- The best-looking platform game... *ever!*
- Incredible update of the popular original *Rayman* which beats the consoles at their own game
- It's fast, it's simple, it's got loads of levels
- Could be the PC's answer to *Mario 64*

Every so often, a game comes along that looks so darn good you can't imagine how it would be possible to improve on the visuals. This, you think, is as impressive as it gets. And, of course, you're wrong.

Today's state-of-the-art thrillfest is tomorrow's moulding antique. Pus-pocked 13-year-olds in 1984 couldn't conceive of anything that could describe the thrill of high-speed 3D combat more efficiently than the ZX Spectrum version of *3D Deathchase*. Could they have foreseen *Incoming* (*PCZ* #63, 90%), Rage's recent carnival for the retinas? No they couldn't. And by the same token, when we gasped at Nintendo's *Mario 64*, reasoning that it was the most impressive 3D platform game of all time, we couldn't have predicted the arrival of Ubisoft's *Rayman 2*, which looks better. Much better.

The original *Rayman* (*PCZ* #36, 76%) was released on just about every format going – there was even an Atari Jaguar version – to great success; except for the PC incarnation, which suffered a muted reception and lukewarm sales. At the time, PC games players just didn't 'do' platform games; they were seen as the exclusive preserve of baseball-cap wearing console chimpanzees. PC gamers didn't want 'simple' games, they wanted 'in-depth' simulations, convoluted strategy games, arcane RPGs and manuals the size of telephone directories. Bearded men's games, in other words. Then along came *Tomb Raider*, proving there was a market for intuitive, console-style platform games after all – as long as they were brilliant. Judging by the evidence *PC Zone* has gawped at thus far, *Rayman 2* might just fit the bill.

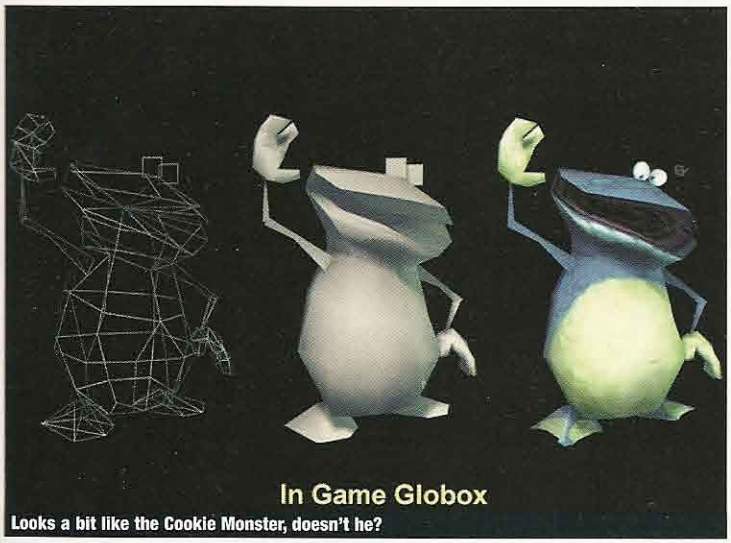
Okay, so we saw the game at the E^3 show in Atlanta, running on an absolute uncle-hugger of a PC – a hulking, 18 bazillion Mhz behemoth crammed to the gills with excess RAM and accelerator cards; a machine so powerful it would make Orac (the cleverest computer in the *Blake's 7* universe) look like a burbling idiot savant. And it was hooked up to a monitor the size of Jupiter, with a



Some of the lighting effects are straight out of *Space Sentinels*. Remember that?

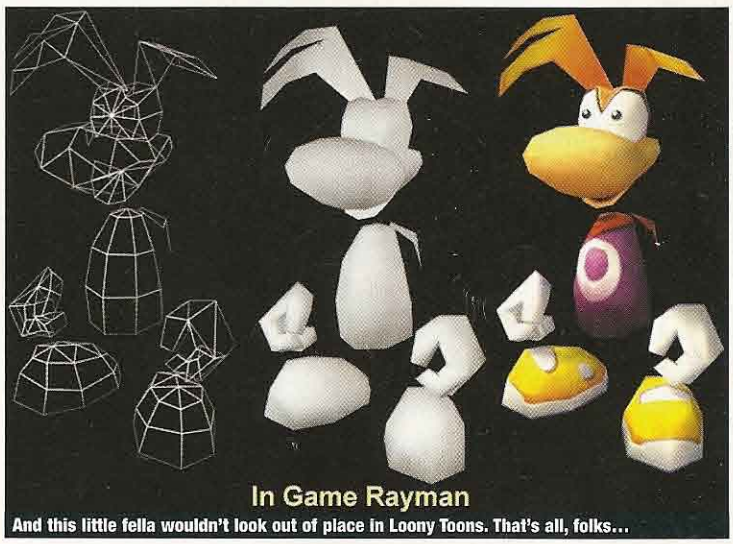


He's got no elbows or knees. Arthritis sufferers: gaze upon him in envied dismay.



In Game Globox

Looks a bit like the Cookie Monster, doesn't he?



In Game Rayman

And this little fella wouldn't look out of place in Loony Toons. That's all, folks...

pair of skeleton-rattling jumbo sub-wooferific speakers either side. This we admit. But by Christ it didn't half look lovely.

Not a flicker. Not a frame out of place. Animation so smooth, so fluid it looks downright organic. High-resolution graphics. Incredible lighting effects – not just occasional cursory blobs of coloured lighting, but full-on cartoon-quality lighting effects: sparkles, bursts, fireballs, smoking trails, glowing embers. Expert use of colour. Fantastically designed environments. Like watching rushes from a hitherto unseen Disney movie. Take it from us, this is something special. Doubtless your system will need to be equally 'special' – although Ubisoft say the game will run fine on a P166 with a 3D card, our guess is you'll need a top-whack machine if you want something truly jaw-dropping.



Some of the in-game characters are straight out of a Tex Avery cartoon.

Like the original *Rayman*, it's a platform game whose main protagonist has no arms or legs: Rayman's hands and feet sort of 'orbit' around him in a peculiarly efficient manner, which is a visual trademark for designer Marcel Ancel (whose forthcoming *Tonic Trouble* stars a similarly limbless hero). The game promises to combine intuitive arcade gameplay with a complex 'living' environment; unusually for a platform game, it seems Rayman will encounter friends and enemies during his quest – their behaviour being determined by AI routines rather than pre-set movement loops.



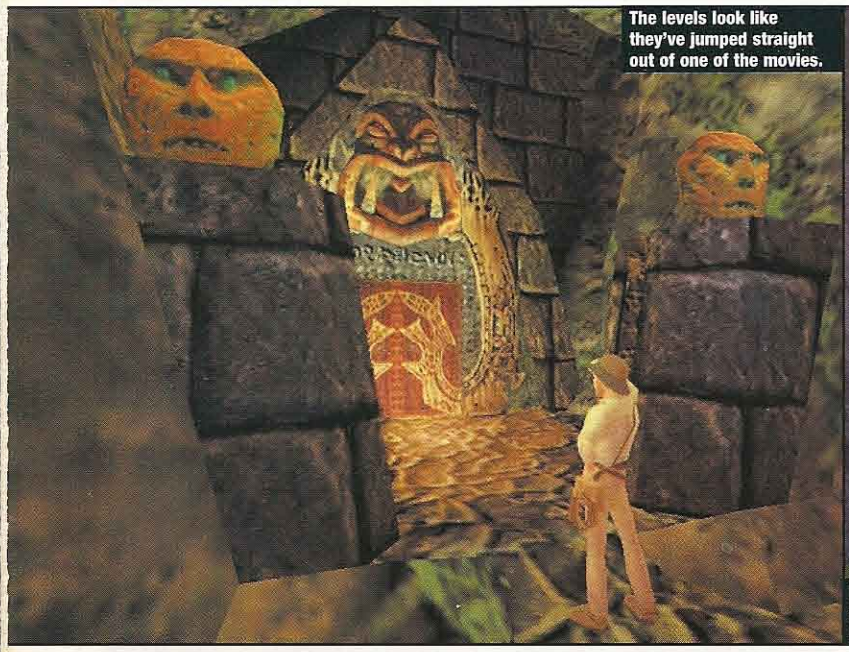
A quick play session left the *Zone* team gurgling contentedly like a gang of pre-school Moss Side toddlers with a big bag of crack. The plot sees Rayman attempting to rescue his friends from an intergalactic zoo, visiting a wide variety of environments in the process. Each of the ten levels has a unique setting, from volcanic labyrinths to dreamy undersea domains, with a healthy smattering of impressive set-pieces to spice things up.

Of course, everything rests on the gameplay itself, so for the meantime judgement is strictly reserved. Word is that *Rayman 2* will be slightly easier than its notoriously tough 2D predecessor, with the accent on exploration and interaction rather than raw survival. Like the aforementioned *Mario 64*, much of the fun is derived from seeking out and investigating hidden areas, so the naturally curious are likely to find the game particularly rewarding.

"Word is that *Rayman 2* will be slightly easier than its notoriously tough 2D predecessor, with the accent on exploration and interaction rather than raw survival"

That's it for now. We'll be going on and on about *Rayman 2* in lascivious detail – and interviewing creator Ancel – in a forthcoming issue. If that's alright by you, the reader. You're our masters. When you say "jump", we ask "How high?" We'll suck the dirty cheese out from under your toenails, chew it up and swallow it whole. We are your 'bitch' – treat us accordingly. PCZ

INDIANA JONES AND THE



The levels look like they've jumped straight out of one of the movies.



He's just like Lara Croft, although his bikini line isn't as well-maintained.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER LucasArts
PUBLISHER Virgin Interactive Entertainment
OUT Winter 1998
WEBSITE www.vie.co.uk

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- It's an action game!
- With Indiana Jones in it!
- It's from LucasArts!
- How can it fail?!

Doctor Jones, Doctor Jones. Calling Doctor Jones... We'd been praying for a new Indiana Jones game, and now LucasArts are set to deliver – in spades

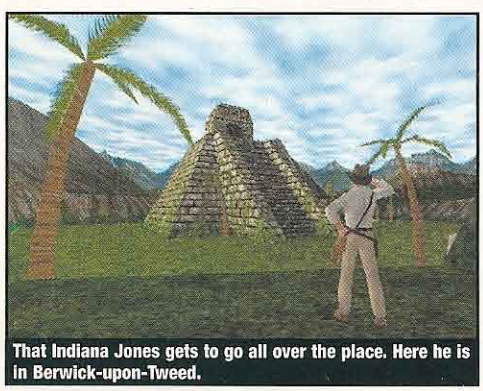
They stole his concept. Now he's stealing it back. Anyone who's played *Tomb Raider* can't have failed to notice that the whole thing plays like a homage to *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. Only fair, then, that LucasArts should offer a new Indiana Jones game that, er, repays the compliment. And here it is: *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine*. Anyone anticipating another point-and-click adventure in the vein of LucasArts' excellent *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis* (*PCZ* #37, 90%), which LucasArts released *waaay* back when, is in for a shock. This new title is something different entirely – an action-rammed 3D platform adventure game thing which looks more like *Tomb Raider* than *Tomb Raider* does.

In the midst of the cacophonous codefest that is the Electronic Entertainment Expo (aka E^3), *PC Zone* was ushered into the LucasArts encampment and granted a sneak preview. Despite being bewildered and shaken by three days of orgiastic revelry, unbearable Deep South humidity and the flickering digital kindling of a trillion monitors, we were still 'together' enough to recognise that this is likely to be one of the biggest games of the year. We performed a boisterous Irish reel by way of celebration, demolishing half the stand in the process, until a security guard persuaded us to stop by tapping playfully on our windpipes with his elbow.

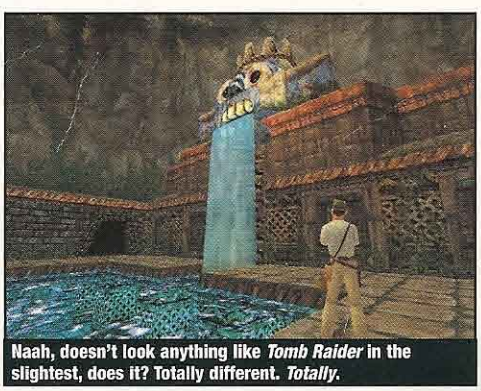
Okay, we're lying. We just stood there and gawped like the spods we are. Anyway: the game. As you can see, it all looks a bit Lara Croft, although we are promised rather more in the way of 'adventuring' elements than were present in *Tomb Raider*. But one thing's for sure: the lead character isn't going to be wearing tight shorts and bending over more than is strictly necessary; although Indy's rugged good looks and brusque, manly demeanour could ensure an enthusiastic female following.

As befits a licence of this stature, LucasArts have brewed up an intriguing storyline which could comfortably grace one of Indy's cinematic outings (and with a fourth movie rumoured to be in the offing, perhaps it actually will). The action takes place in the 1950s – some years after the events of *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* (you know, the one with Sean Connery in it) – and, as per tradition, revolves around a desperate search for an ancient artefact. Since World War II rid the world of Indy's established foes, the Nazis, a new enemy has emerged – them pesky Ruskies.

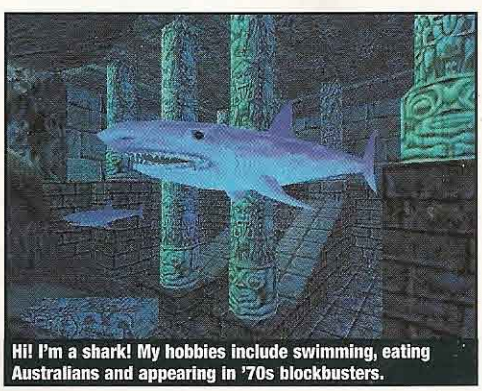
"We wouldn't be human if we weren't desperately excited by this game, so it's no surprise that our anticipation glands are already swelling to their maximum"



That Indiana Jones gets to go all over the place. Here he is in Berwick-upon-Tweed.

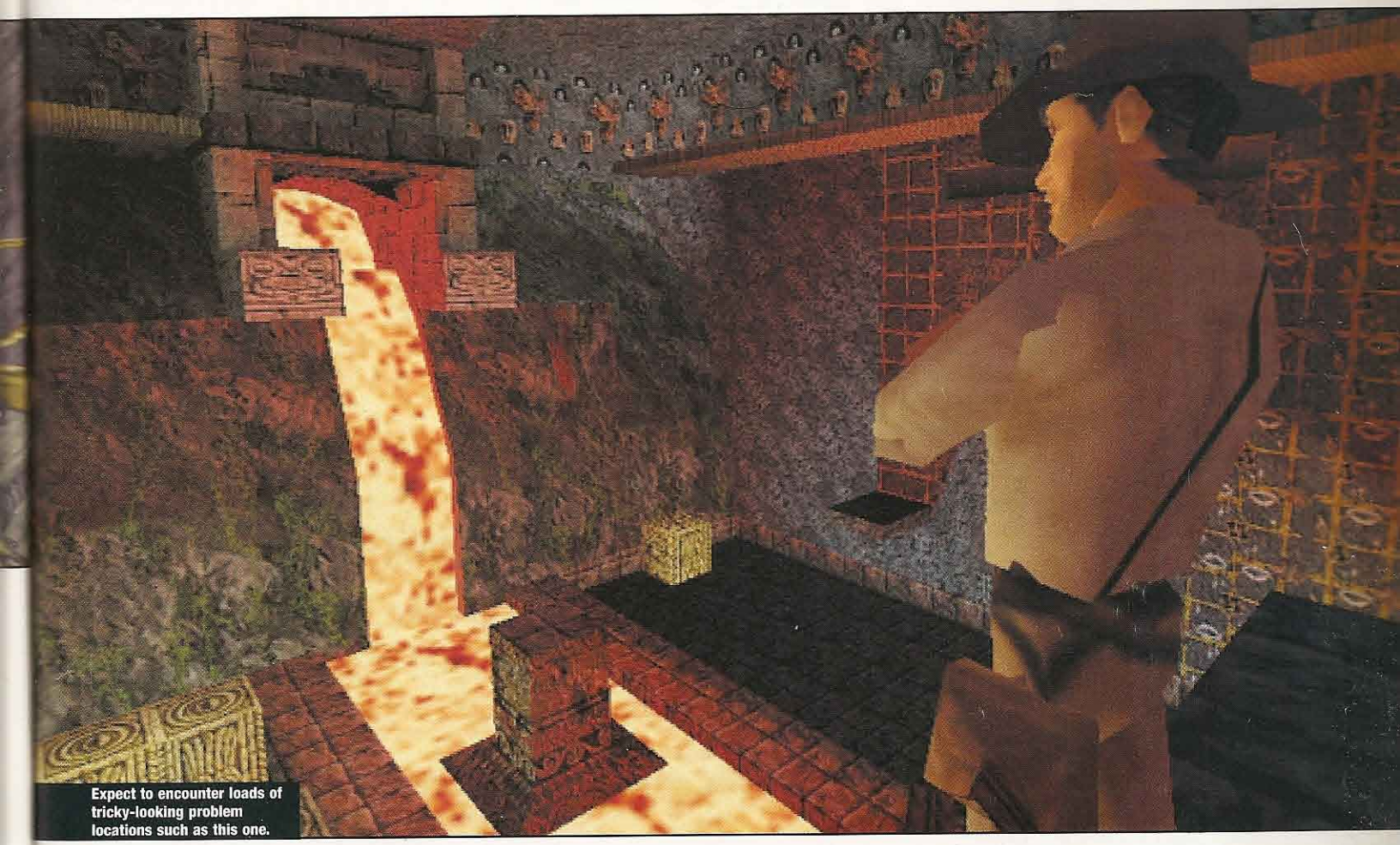


Naah, doesn't look anything like *Tomb Raider* in the slightest, does it? Totally different. *Totally*.



Hi! I'm a shark! My hobbies include swimming, eating Australians and appearing in '70s blockbusters.

INFERNAL MACHINE

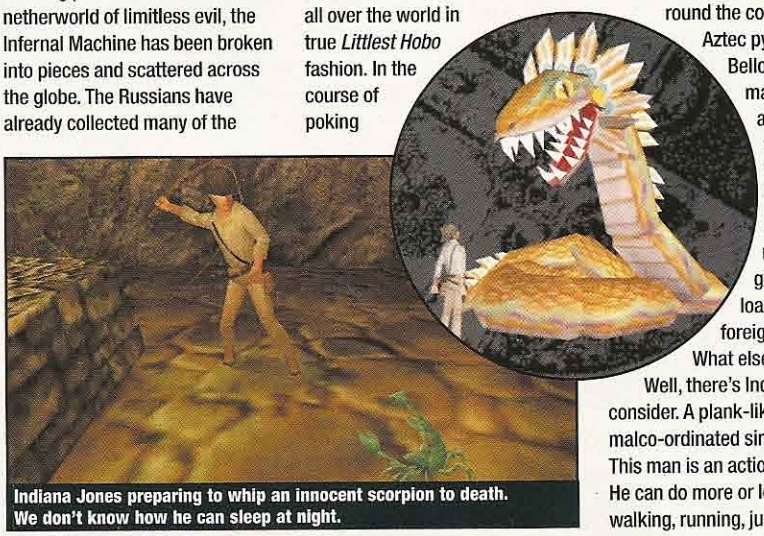


Expect to encounter loads of tricky-looking problem locations such as this one.

The game begins with Dr Jones receiving word that a Soviet professor has been searching for an ancient device (the Infernal Machine of the title) which is capable of opening the door to another dimension.

As tends to be the case with ancient artefacts capable of creating portals into an ethereal netherworld of limitless evil, the Infernal Machine has been broken into pieces and scattered across the globe. The Russians have already collected many of the parts and re-assembled them, but they're missing a few vital components. Someone has to find them before the bad guys do. And that someone is Su Ingle, erstwhile presenter of *Wildtrack*.

It isn't really, it's Indiana Jones. Anyway, this deviously contrived storyline provides the perfect excuse to send Our Hero all over the world in true *Littlest Hobo* fashion. In the course of poking around for the essential machine parts, Indy explores a range of exotic locations, the likes of which could keep *Wish You Were Here* going for an entire season. Gasp! as Indy creeps through the ruins of Babylon. Shriek! as he clambers up the Tian Shan mountain in Kazakstan. Jabber lewdly! as he peers nervously round the corner of an Aztec pyramid. Bellow like a mangled ape! as he visits the Arndale Centre in Wandsworth (he doesn't really). You get the picture: loads of poncy foreign locations. What else?



Indiana Jones preparing to whip an innocent scorpion to death. We don't know how he can sleep at night.

Well, there's Indy himself to consider. A plank-like mass of malco-ordinated sinew he is not. This man is an action hero, right? He can do more or less anything: walking, running, jumping, crawling, climbing and swinging about like a bestubbled primate are his stock-in-trade. Expect nail-gnashing, platform-hopping and cavern-traversing shenanigans to feature prominently.

Aside from nigh-on suicidal acts of derring-do, there's another thing that crops up with enthralling regularity in the Indiana Jones movies: hideous violence. And sure enough, it's another thing that features heavily in the game. Indy himself is armed and dangerous. Joining the famous whip in his personal arsenal is a motley collection of pistols, hand grenades, landmines and bazookas, all the better for pointing at folk. The adversaries aren't just human, either; there's all manner of shadowy, supernatural nasties lurking menacingly in the even more shadowy corners of the game.

And as if that wasn't enough, Indy's set to become all 'magic'. Each time he collects a chunk of the Infernal Machine, it bestows a weird, other-wordly power upon him. These additional powers will apparently prove vital to the quest, but LucasArts are being all tight-lipped about what they'll actually allow Dr Jones to do. Grant him the ability to remove rigid jam jar lids with ease? Bestow upon him an unshakeable aptitude for subtle yet striking interior design? Enable him to converse naturally with people from Cardiff? Who can say? *(Not you, by the sound of things – Ed.)*

Want more? Well how's this: it's going to include a bunch of multiplayer modes, too – co-operative and competitive. How these will work is anyone's guess at present, but hey, at least they'll be there. *(Hark at Mister Informative – Ed.)*

We wouldn't be human if we weren't desperately excited by this game. LucasArts haven't disappointed with an Indy title yet (er… except for *Indiana Jones And His Desktop Adventures*, that is), so it's no surprise that our anticipation glands are already swelling to their maximum. PZ



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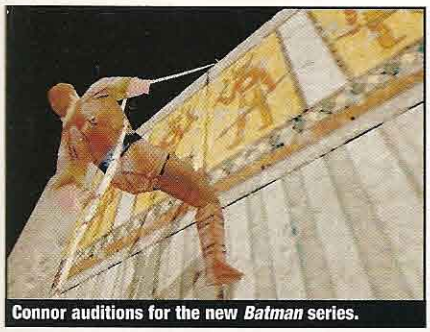
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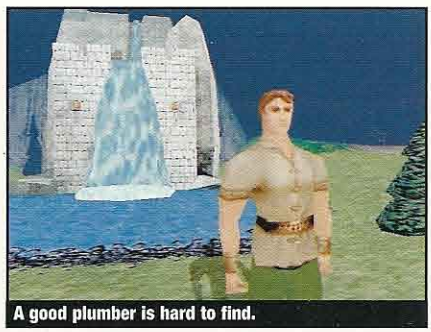
PC World
Tel: 0990 464464

Software Warehouse
Tel:01675 466467

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Connor auditions for the new *Batman* series.


A good plumber is hard to find.

MASK OF ETERNITY

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Sierra Studios
PUBLISHER Cendant Software
OUT Late summer '98
WEBSITE www.sierra.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- A brand new 3D engine for the eighth in the classic *King's Quest* series
- Seven huge game worlds filled with Roberta Williamss' trademark niceness to explore

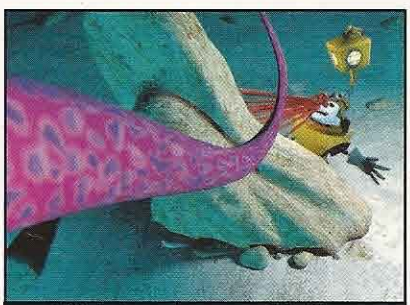
The pattern emerging from Sierra Studios is 3D, 3D, 3D (which should make the next *Leisure Suit Larry* game interesting, to say the least). The latest *King's Quest* game follows suit with a brand new first- or third-person perspective engine telling its traditional story of twee.

Roberta Williams is back in the land of Daventry for this eighth title, telling the story of Connor MacLyrr and his battle to save his world from a magical blight the likes of which haven't been seen for… ooh, at least a week. You have to work your way through seven distinct lands, from swamps to mountains to a spiritual plane, home to the deadly but stupidly named Vicious Beast (and the lesser evil of the Slightly Ticked Off Beast).

Sarcasm aside, *Mask Of Eternity* promises to be a challenging and lasting adventure game, with an engine that should win back fans to the genre. PCZ

GRIM FANDANGO


Over 80 mind-enhancing puzzles…


…and 30 glorious cut-scenes – all in 3D.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER LucasArts
PUBLISHER LucasArts
OUT September'98
WEBSITE www.lucasarts.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- LucasArts have a proven track record in this field
- Look, trust us: this game will be superb

We don't want to have to preview this again. Not because we don't like it, but because we can't bloody wait to get our hands on the finished article. Okay, so we haven't actually played it yet, but we can comfortably predict that *Grim Fandango* is likely to be the adventure game of the year. Unapologetically stylish, laugh-out-loud funny, and epic in structure, it's a distinctive cut above the usual half-arsed toss that so often passes for a 'game' these days. Don't believe us? Check out the review of *Hopkins FBI* on page 117 and see how bad adventures can be, and then consider this: *Grim Fandango* is that game's absolute opposite. A promising blend of film noir, Mexican folklore and Abbot and Costello, it could single-handedly mark a turnaround in the fortunes of the beleaguered adventure genre. We certainly hope so. PCZ



GABRIEL KNIGHT 3

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Sierra Studios
PUBLISHER Cendant Software
OUT October '98
WEBSITE www.sierra.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

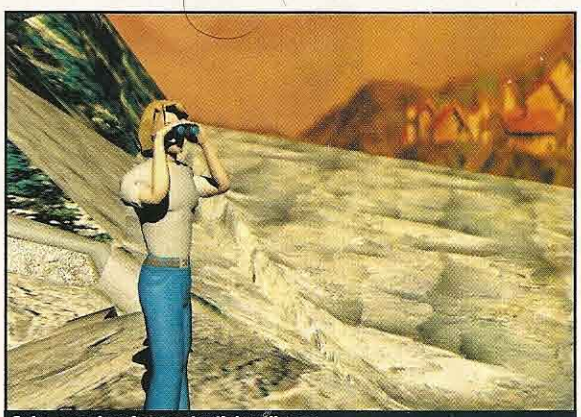
- A brand new 3D engine that hopes to reinvent the wheel for adventures
- A strong, richly-detailed storyline with well-rounded characters

Adventure games are presently in something of a popularity nadir. Sales are low, titles are few and far between, and quality titles are even rarer.

One non-LucasArts series with a good pedigree to fall back on though is Sierra's *Gabriel Knight* saga, and this third title, *Blood Of The Sacred, Blood Of The Damned*, is hoping to build its reputation further.

Using a brand new 3D engine (rather than licensing someone else's), the game deals with ancient mysteries and secret societies in the French town of Rennes-le-Chateau, putting you, as Knight, in the centre of things. Control-wise you act as a free-roaming camera, guiding Knight's actions around each location, interacting in real-time with the characters as they wander about under their own steam.

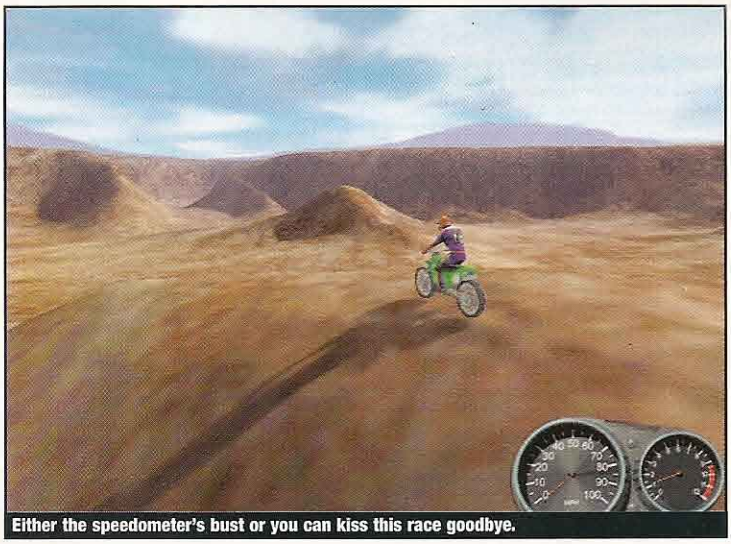
Jane Jensen, the author, has a good track record with *Gabriel Knight*, combining detailed and intelligent storylines with a good degree of game design. For the genre's sake, the hope is that she can do the same here. PCZ

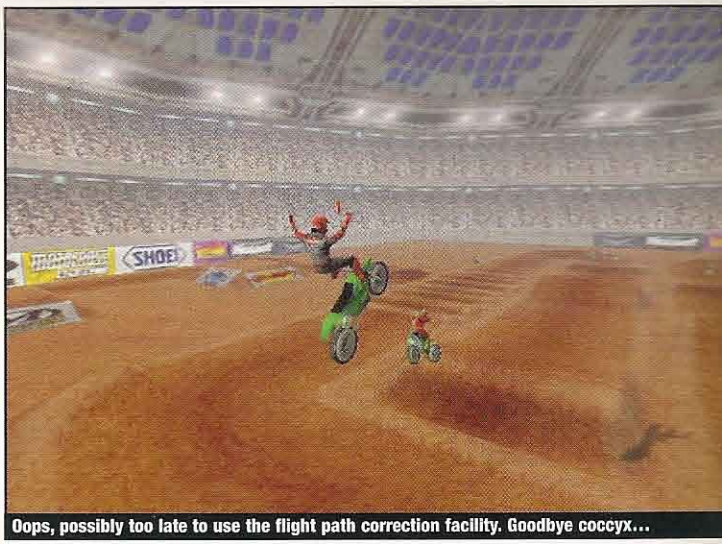

Gabe searches for a potential audience.



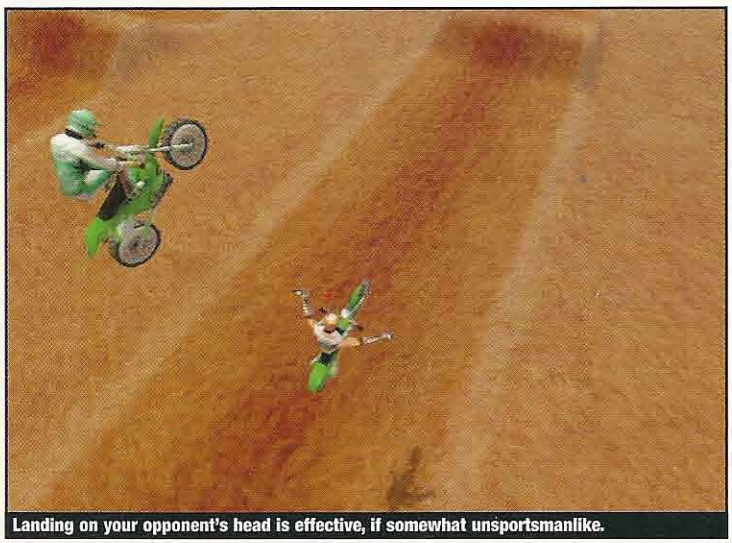


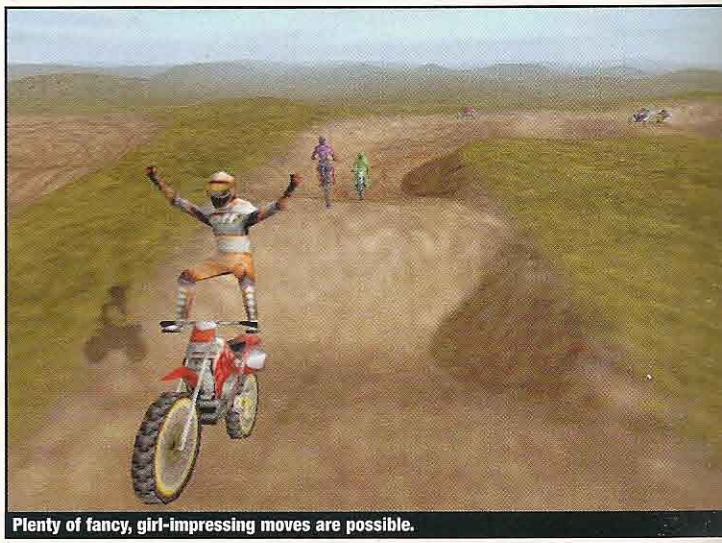

The French take their tea very seriously.


Either the speedometer's bust or you can kiss this race goodbye.



Oops, possibly too late to use the flight path correction facility. Goodbye coccyx...


Landing on your opponent's head is effective, if somewhat unsportsmanlike.


Plenty of fancy, girl-impressing moves are possible.

MOTOCROSS MADNESS

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Rainbow Studios
PUBLISHER Microsoft
OUT Autumn '98
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/games

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Uses 3D acceleration to deliver spanking graphical clarity
- Vast number of tracks to tear around
- Track editor if you want even more
- Wheelies and everything

PC ZONE TIP FOR THE TOP

Riding a motorcycle through a quarry is fun but dangerous. Here come Microsoft with a much safer alternative

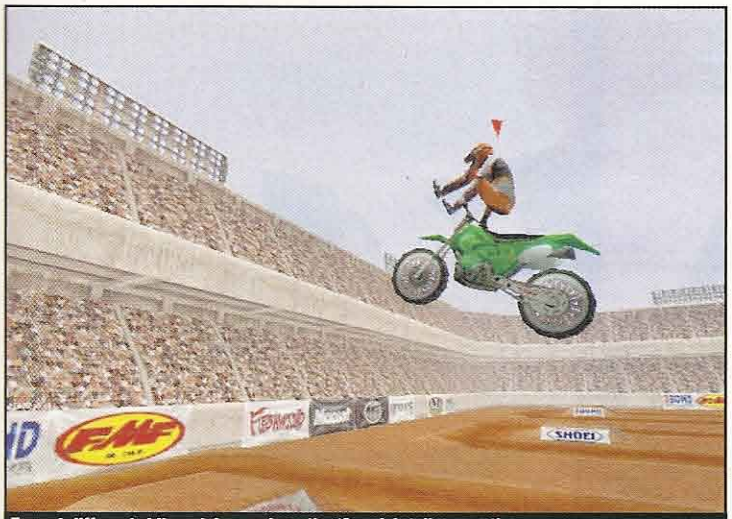
If desperately clinging to a bucking two-wheeled machine is your idea of fun, then you might want to chance your arm at the largely ignored sport of motocross. Careering over terrain clearly not intended for smooth transportation, twatting your face on the handlebars or crushing your knackers on the petrol tank is an occupational hazard, as is sporadically being tossed through the air like a rag doll. In this country the sport is largely the preserve of country bumpkins, and some years ago we ruled the world. Motocross is also the national sport of Belgium, if that helps.

It wasn't long before the Americans saw its potential though, and started entering – and inevitably winning – the World Championship. As is their wont, our Stateside chums also bastardised the sport, leading to the stadium-bound Supercross which takes place over man-made courses mainly consisting of unlikely jumps, with as much time spent airborne as tearing up the track. As a spectacle, these affairs are in the same ballpark as the ubiquitous Monster Truck events. And perhaps sinisterly, Microsoft also have a game called *Monster Truck Madness*, clearly touting the White Trash vote; although the number of PCs per trailer park must be negligible.

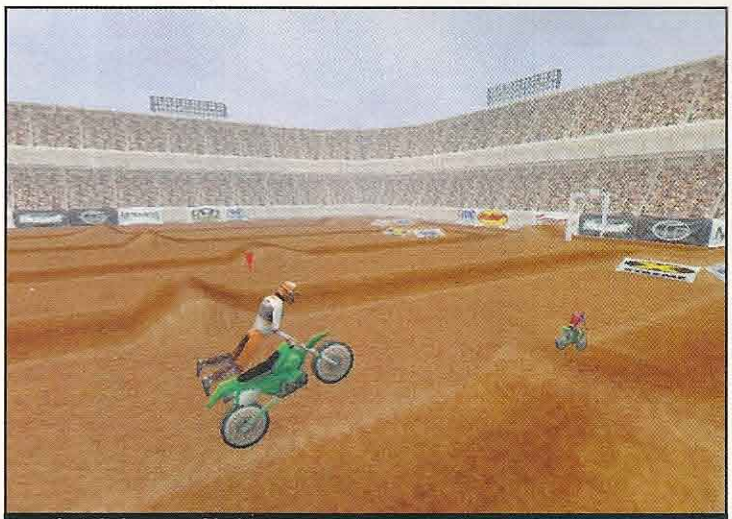
Clinical insanity isn't a prerequisite for *Motocross Madness* though, and it is certainly a lot less expensive – and less dangerous – than the real thing. It is no pastime for the lily-livered, and the game seeks to capture the thrills and spills of the sport at its most extreme, replicating traditional motocross as well as the more extravagant stunt-based shenanigans, albeit with a distinctly American flava – so no tearing around a field in Hampshire, or incurring the wrath of the Welsh farming community. The courses all appear to be in the middle of nowheresville, USA, boasting such names as Augusta Park, Bela's Bluegrass and Claymore Hills.

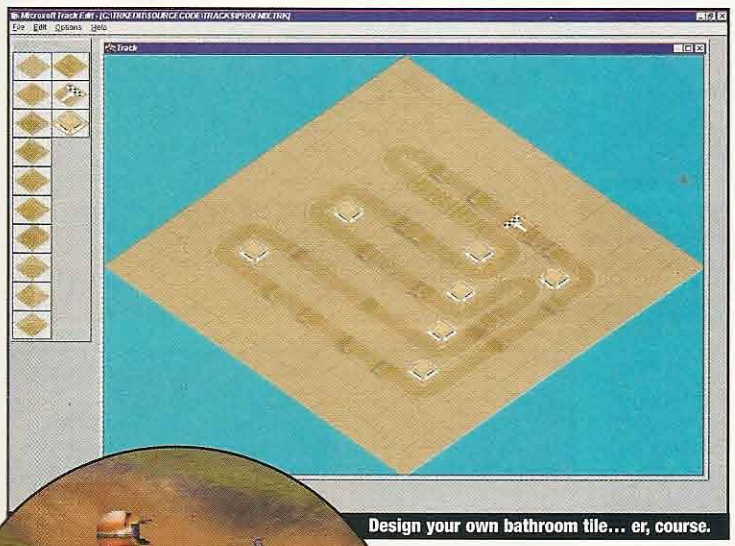
In the single-event option, up to ten opponents can be raced against over a choice of 14 different outdoor circuits of varied topology, encompassing huge gashes in the landscape as well as more sober desert-based affairs. The whole lot can also be combined to form a championship season, with points awarded accordingly. Endurance fans are also catered for, the game featuring two long-distance Baja courses, in common with Red Orb's forthcoming *Baja 1000 Racing*; although with *Motocross Madness* two wheels would appear to be better than four.

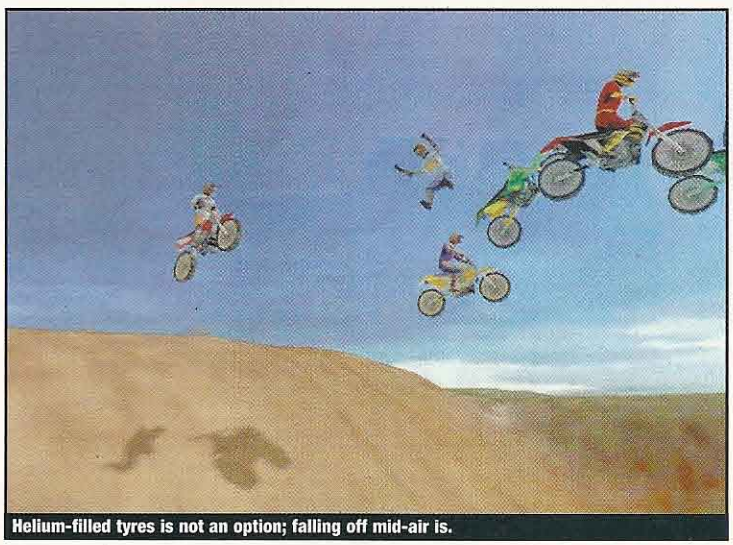
If sitting in a stadium chewing on burgers and guzzling liquid sugar while whooping unnecessarily is your thing (if you're American, then), *Motocross*



Try out different riding styles such as the 'Spanish toilet squat'...


...or the 'missionary position'.


Design your own bathroom tile... er, course.


Helium-filled tyres is not an option; falling off mid-air is.



Madness should appease you via its Supercross section, with bikes tearing around tightly designed tracks in stadiums clearly designed for hoofing air-filled leather around. Again, solo races can be attempted or an entire season can be played, encompassing San Diego, Indianapolis, Phoenix, Minneapolis, Denver, Houston, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Seattle, Boston, Atlanta, Tampa Bay, Charlotte, Cleveland, and Dallas. Which is nice. And if you're still not satisfied with tear-arsing around half of America, a track editor enables you to virtually import several tons of soil and fashion a course according to your own design, making it as easy or as difficult as you want.

For the Pepsi Max drinkers, a stunt quarry competition is included, taking place in five different rock quarries where competitors must complete as many stunts as possible to succeed. There are 16 separate tricks to attempt, and these take the form of standard ostentatious activities involving limbs being angled in unnatural directions, and the bike being tossed around like a BMX in the hands of a particularly reckless solvent abuser.

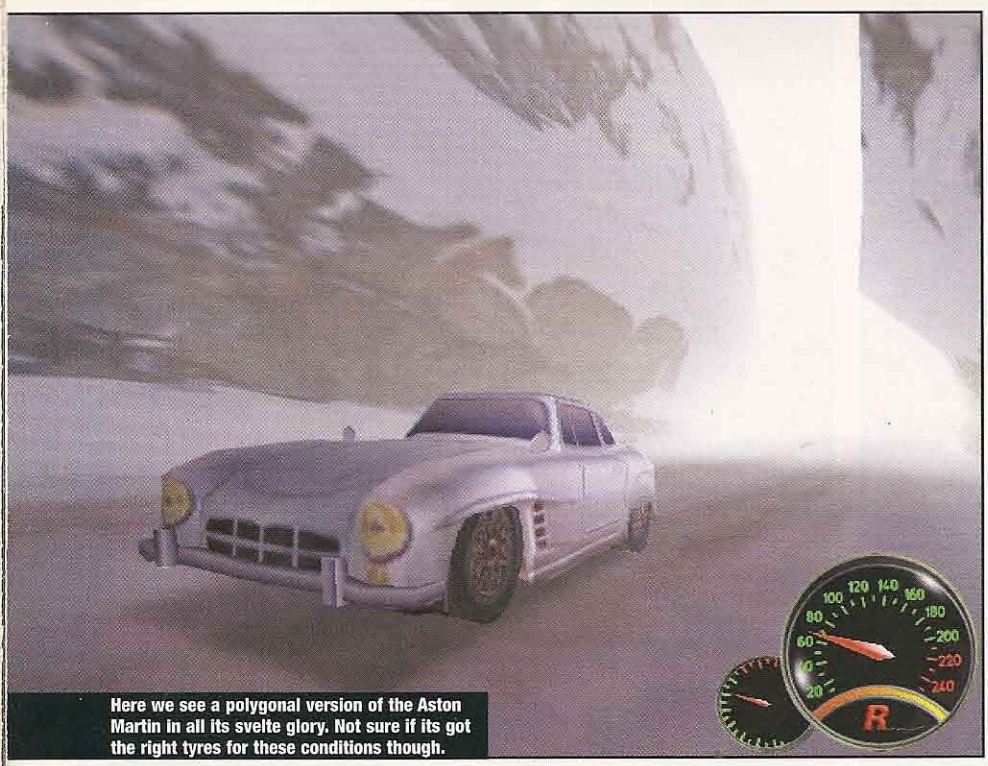
The game boasts a unique rider and bike physics model, which on an early look appears to work a treat. As well as controlling the throttle, brake, steering and gears on the bike, the crucial factor of the rider's centre of gravity has been cunningly integrated into the control system. What this means is that if you get a jump wrong and find yourself in danger of falling off the back of the bike and acquiring a heavily bruised coccyx – not to mention ego – the position can be rectified by lurching forward and steadying the flight path of the bike. You can also lean to either side to straighten the bike out, or simply give it some angle poise to impress any watching women. We've had an early version in the office, and most people have had a bit of a dabble on it. Early impressions are that it could be pretty cool, with the centre of gravity feature proving very effective, although mastering it will inevitably take some time.

Without wishing to add further weight to Microsoft's world domination enterprise, they do boast a joypad which is perfectly suited to the game, namely the Sidewinder Freestyle Pro. At the recent E^3 'do', *Motocross Madness* figured prominently on the Microsoft stand, and they wisely opted to attach said joypads to every PC running the game. Using a combination of minuscule gyroscopes and black magic, the Sidewinder Freestyle Pro enables you to shift your arse around on the seat without resorting to anything as vulgar as primitive button-pressing. By simply tilting the pad in the right direction, you can ably steady your bike and pull off some fancy moves. It works splendidly, and if Microsoft were to bundle it in some kind of exploitative deal then everyone would be happy, as going back to a normal pad or a keyboard after using the Freestyle just isn't the same.

Nevertheless, it is shaping up to be a handsome game, although crashing into other riders and being violently thrown over the handlebars occurs far too often at the moment. We'll soon get the hang of it though, and we'll let you know exactly how good it is as soon as is humanly possible. You lucky people. PCZ

"It is no pastime for the lily-livered, and the game seeks to capture the thrills and spills of the sport at its most extreme"





Here we see a polygonal version of the Aston Martin in all its svelte glory. Not sure if its got the right tyres for these conditions though.

SPEED BUSTERS

Ubi Soft take on Electronic Arts' *Need For Speed* series with a thrill-laden racing game of their own

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ubi Soft
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
OUT October '98
WEBSITE www.ubisoft.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Not only looks good, but also feels good as well – essential for a racing game
- Eclectic choice of vehicles, plus detailed, varied levels

On something of a phoenix-like revival at the moment, Ubi Soft seem to have a number of cracking PC games waiting in the wings for release before the end of the year. As well as the stunning *Rayman 2* (see page 56), those crazy French developers have also announced a new racing game called *Speed Busters* – an ultra crap name, but with ultra fancy graphics and a promising 'feel' to boot.

The plot itself is pretty nonsense: apparently the police have lost their minds and are now rewarding people for outrageous street stunts and speeding records; and most people would do best to concentrate on the matter in hand – the racing.

Spread across six real-life courses set in Hollywood, Aspen, Mexican Inca Temples, Canadian farmland, Las Vegas and Louisiana, *Speed Busters* is set to feature four styles of play (arcade, championship, multiplayer and online), and seven car styles from the '60s to the present day. Every car will handle differently and realistically due to the physics models the programmers have employed to create the chassis and wheels, both of which react separately to each other as they would in real life. It seems Ubi Soft have learnt a great deal from their successes with *POD*, and are keen to keep the speed of the game up and the amount of clutter on the screen down. As we all know, frame rates are everything in a racing game.

"Our goal was to create a sensory overload racing game that locks and loads the player into a stimulating world of fast-track environments where skill and heart-pounding original rock sound tracks drive the game," Yves Guillemot, President of Ubi Soft, told us. "When gamers finish with *Speed Busters*, every muscle should be vibrating." Erm, *every* muscle? Charlie Brooker will have a field day. "To keep things interesting," Yves says, "we've added touches of humour, pop culture references and plenty of surprises."

Their plan is to cram the game full of hidden goodies, including secret tracks, power-ups (road assistant kits, radar detectors, road maps… erm, car insurance), an appearance by King Kong (s'true – seen it with our own eyes), plus other fancy stuff such as progressive texturing (when cars leave skids marks on the road and the marks stay there).

Graphically, Ubi Soft are pulling out all the stops with an array of special effects including reflective chrome, real-time shadowing, fogging and progressive lighting. Overall though, it looks like something of a cross between *The Need For Speed* and *Super Mario Kart* – but without the chimps and bananas. Should be a lot of fun, then. PZ

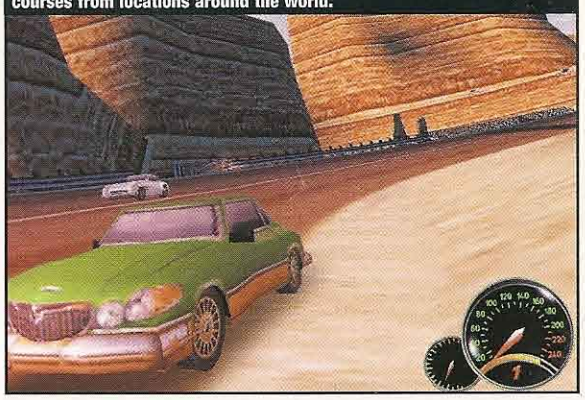
Driving games make particularly good use of 3D graphic cards and *Speed Busters* is no exception.



"Won't be a minute, love. Just popping into the house to pick up my mobile phone."



Speed Busters will feature cars from a 30-year period of history, and courses from locations around the world.



Going head-to-head against *The Need For Speed* (especially in light of v3 in the series) should be an interesting battle for road supremacy.





Ultimate Race proved a favourite with *Zone*...



...and *Rally* looks even better. Rah.

ULTIM@TE RACE RALLY

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Kalisto
PUBLISHER MicroProse
OUT November '98
WEBSITE www.microprose.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- It's *Ultim@te Race*, but in a rally stylee
- It features both on-track and off-track racing

***Ultim@te Race Pro* (*PCZ* #62, 88%) surprised us all earlier this year, providing much network mayhem and lining the pockets of local cab firms, with multiplayer games continuing well past the hours of public transport. An extremely good-looking game, it retailed at a price that was nice, and offered some exciting racing and a superb DeathMatch Arena.**

Kalisto clearly know when they're on to a good thing, and have dressed it up in some different trousers and called it *Ultim@te Race Rally*. The action takes place over sandy African roads, through the snowy mountains of the European Alps, over tarmac and rough ground in Greece, and through the heart of a Scandinavian forest. Again, 3D acceleration will be a must, but it should be worth it, the game offers dynamic weather effects including rain, fog, sunset and night racing. Authentic geographical and topological scenery should ensure a rough ride, although there's no mention of DeathMatch as yet. PCZ

MOTO RACER 2

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Delphine Software
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
OUT October '98
WEBSITE www.ea.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Hyper-realistic motorbike racing
- Improved graphics, with weather and everything

The original *Moto Racer* (*PCZ* #51, 77%) arrived to a very favourable reception from the press last year (except in *PC Zone* – Duncan McDonald didn't rate it particularly). The sequel is almost upon us, and judging by the early demo of the game we received at E^3 it looks set to improve upon the first game in almost every way. Enhanced native 3D support gives the game a very polished look, as well as providing all-new weather effects such as rain and snow. But perhaps the biggest enhancement over the original is the inclusion of a track editor which enables you to create your own tracks. As in the first game, both arcade and simulation modes are included, giving know-it-alls the opportunity to show how they can handle realistic bike models, and complete duffers the opportunity to play about with their gamepads while their bikes steer themselves around the circuits. Look out for a preview in a future issue of *Zone*. PCZ



Moto Racer 2: looks pretty, non?



High speed car chases distinguish *Driver* from normal racing fodder.

DRIVER

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Reflections
PUBLISHER TBA
OUT Before Christmas
WEBSITE TBA

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Lets you drive a really fast car through the crowded streets of a city
- Realistic enough to keep joyriders off the streets?

An updated, fully playable version of Reflections' as yet unsigned *Driver* recently met with great enthusiasm from everyone that played it here at *PC Zone*. As previously reported in this very magazine (*PCZ* #64, page 10), *Driver* will appeal to those of you who love a good car chase (ie pretty much everyone), such is the nature of the realistic high-speed action.

As the titular 'anti-hero' getaway driver of the game, your mission is to evade capture by the authorities and escape the confines of the city you're placed in. A number of different '70s-style vehicles are planned (including the Buick Skylark and the Ford Torino), plus a variety of city streets on which to cause automative mayhem, from the wide-open roads of LA to the undulating streets of San Francisco. Although *Driver* is already being described by some as a 3D *GTA* or the next *Carmageddon*, the inherent lack of in-game violence should ensure it a wider audience than both of those games. PCZ

GRAND PRIX LEGENDS

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Papyrus
PUBLISHER Cendant Software
OUT August '98
WEBSITE www.sierra.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- A refreshing change from your average Grand Prix game
- Virtual cockpit technology – a first for this kind of game

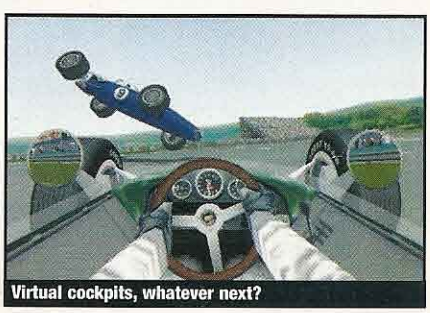
***GPL* takes you back to 1967, a time when corporate sponsorship was yet to rear its ugly head, and today's highly powered hi-tech aerodynamics technology was but a twinkle in the eye of the would-be Grand Prix heroes of yesteryear. Responsibility for the creation of this unique sim has been put in the capable hands of Papyrus (the creators of *Indycar* and *Nascar*), who claim to have created a fully 3D engine which they say will "redefine the limits of vehicle dynamics modelling on the PC". For extra realism, *GPL* will feature the first 3D cockpit ever to appear in a racing sim. This feature is normally only seen in top-end flight sims, but it makes perfect sense to use it in a driving sim, given the increased field of vision it will give you. The now obligatory 3D card support expected (and demanded) by discerning gamers will be present, and with Papyrus behind the wheel of the project (as it were) we expect *GPL* to become a driving force *(That was terrible – Ed)* when it's out in August.** PCZ



Papyrus take you back to 1967 with *Grand Prix Legends*.

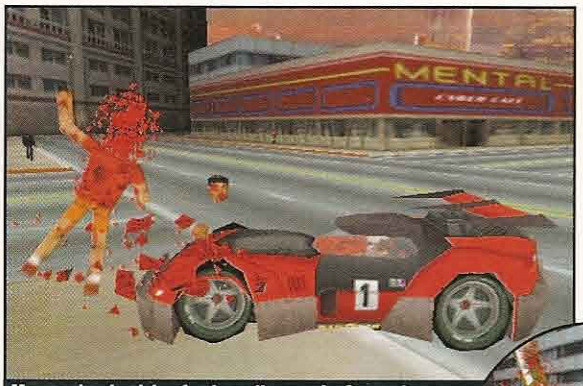


Accurate car models provide extra realism.



Virtual cockpits, whatever next?

CARMAGEDDON II: CARPOCALYPSE NOW



More ped-pulverising fun is on the way in *Carma 2.*

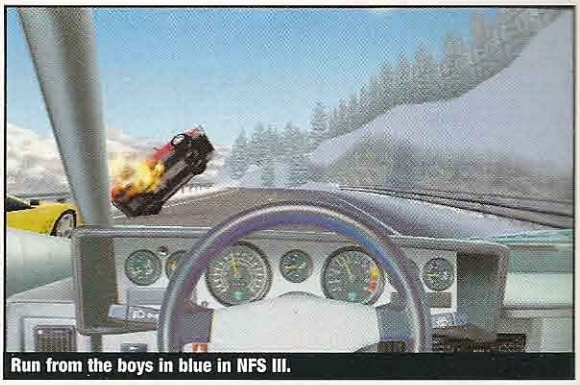
THE DETAILS

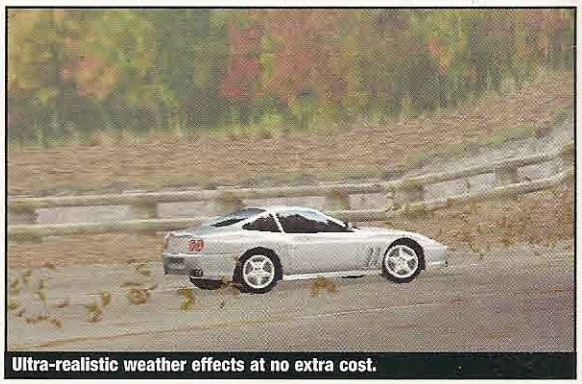
DEVELOPER Stainless Software
PUBLISHER SCi
OUT December '98
WEBSITE sci.co.uk

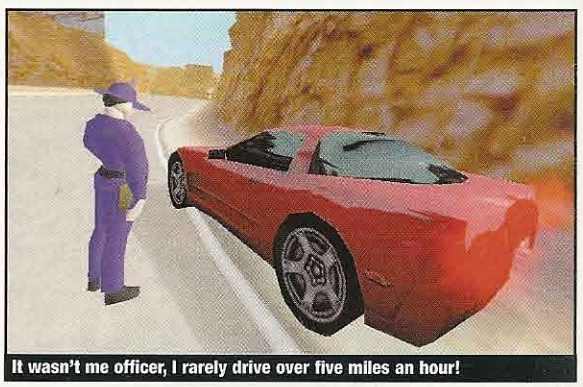
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Gorier, and more vandal-friendly than ever
- Your local MP is going to absolutely hate it

We covered this in lascivious detail last issue, and to be honest not much has changed since then. But hey, we're still just as excited. Cars being bent and broken in half, glass panels shattering left right and centre, and, best of all, pedestrians getting their limbs ripped clean off. It's not all gore, gore, gore, mind. We're also promised sturdier multiplayer options (including a bizarre-sounding 'vampire mode'), improved opponent AI, and a slew of brand new cars hogging the virtual forecourt. If the programmers have their way, you'll even get to mow down elephants and baby seals this time round. The whole shocking shebang promises to be an orgy of vehicular carnage for all the family, in other words (assuming each member of said family is aged 18 or over). Controversy is assured, and you can bet your glans *Carmageddon II* will be grist for the tabloid mill when it pokes its head over the parapet in time for Christmas. We can't wait. PCZ

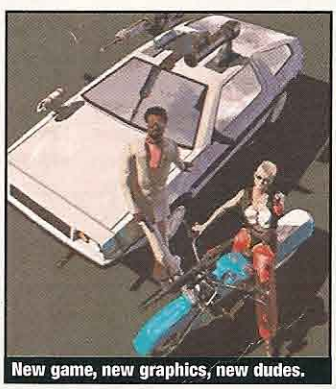

Run from the boys in blue in NFS III.


Ultra-realistic weather effects at no extra cost.


It wasn't me officer, I rarely drive over five miles an hour!

INTERSTATE '82


A brand new engine provides top-end graphics.


New game, new graphics, new dudes.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Activision
PUBLISHER Activision
OUT November '98
WEBSITE www.activision.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Fab game concept, this time with a decent 3D engine – crikey, anything could happen
- Erm, 'great' '80s soundtrack

Kneel to the power of the Dark Side – the new accelerator-only 3D engine developed in-house by Activision and making its debut in this highly anticipated sequel to the original (but flawed) *Interstate '77*. As Taurus, your main task will be to rescue your partner, who's been kidnapped by vicious highwaymen and held ransom in the depths of a run-down Las Vegas. The aforementioned 3D engine, it is claimed, will be more than capable of creating intricate cities and fast-moving, high-octane vehicles. And although the version we played recently seemed pretty bare on the landscape front, the whole thing did move like shit off a shovel. Gameplay-wise, *Interstate* fans should expect more of the same highly stylised action (this time with an '80s feel), with in-engine cut sequences stitching the story together and big new weapons to blow it apart again. PCZ

NEED FOR SPEED III: HOT PURSUIT

THE DETAILS

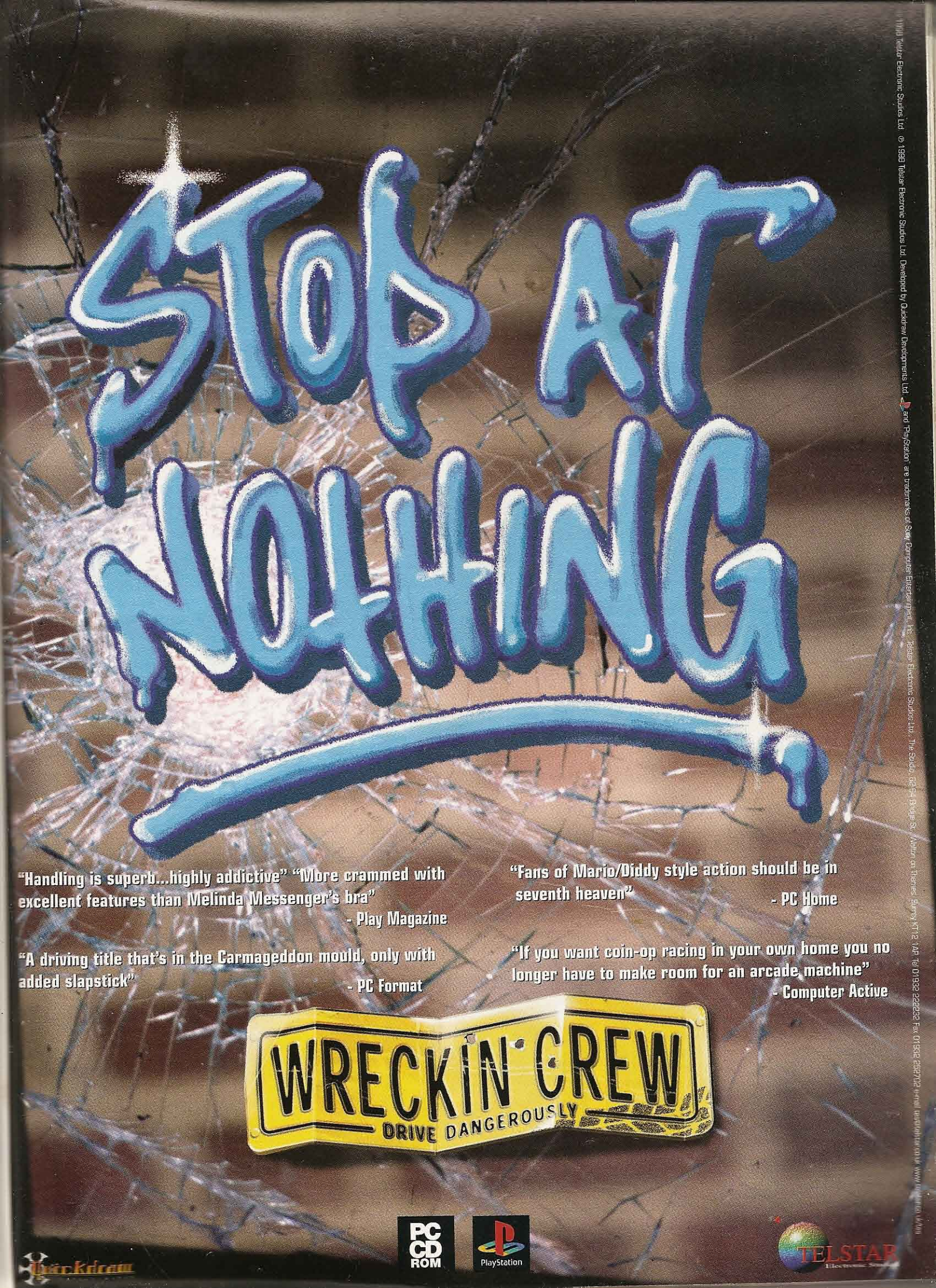
DEVELOPER Electronic Arts
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
OUT September '98
WEBSITE www.ea.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- All-new police chase option
- We've played it, and it looks great

Bypassing the inevitable amphetamine requirement hilarity, here are the facts. *Need For Speed III: Hot Pursuit* brings the successful driving series up to date with 3Dfx-enhanced graphics and an all-new gameplay feature, namely the Hot Pursuit of the title. What this entails is being chased by the busies – also known as the fuzz, the cops and the old bill, as well as a couple of more unsavoury nicknames. Yes, traffic violation is coming to your PC, and there are even five different levels of police behaviour.

Apart from the police harassment option, there are a host of licensed supercars available, more of which will be downloadable from the Internet. The game will feature eight real-world courses, replete with the mandatory shortcuts and alternate routes. Night driving is included in the game – with high and low beams – and the road surface corresponds to the varying weather, becoming icy when snowing and slippery when wet. PCZ



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GANGSTERS

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Hothouse Creations
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
OUT October '98
WEBSITE www.eidosinteractive.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Resource management set in the world of 1930s fun-loving criminals
- *The Godfather* meets *Sim City* meets *Syndicate Wars*

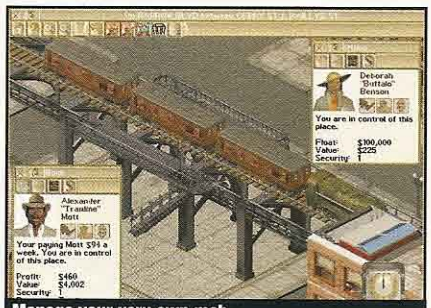
Ever wondered what machine-gunning someone in the face is like? Course not, you've played *Quake*. But have you ever wondered what it's like to issue the order to have someone machine-gunned in the face while you sit back in your plush armchair, with local businessmen kissing your ring? Well, *Gangsters* is all that and a bag of chips.

Set in a prohibition era Chicago-like city, it's *The Godfather* meets *Sim City* meets *Syndicate Wars*. Set up a criminal underworld, run prostitution rings, extort protection money from local shop owners – everything a young child could dream of. The only thing missing is an official Joe Pesci licence.

It's certainly an original take on the resource management game and, like every other 'criminal' game, will probably be as hilarious as it is playable. Put it this way: if you don't buy it, Eidos will probably send some boys round with hammers to say hello to your kneecaps. You focks. PCZ



***SimCity* meets corruption and mayhem.**

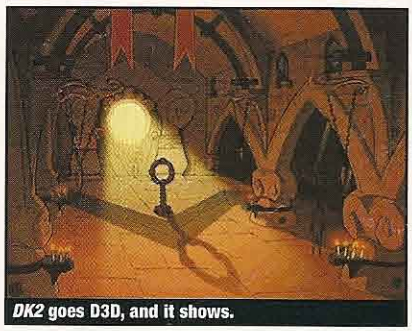


Manage your very own mob.

DUNGEON KEEPER II



A monster we made earlier.



***DK2* goes D3D, and it shows.**

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Bullfrog
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
OUT November '98
WEBSITE www.bullfrog.co.uk

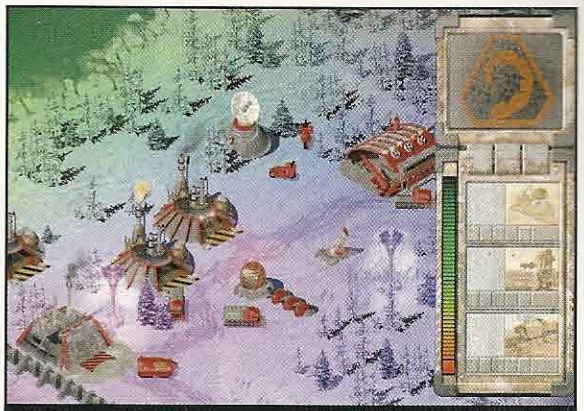
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- The original *Dungeon Keeper* was one of the most innovative and original games ever developed
- The new polygon-based 3D game engine is a vast improvement over the old sprite-based technology

Visually, at least, the all-new, revamped *Dungeon Keeper* should be a feast. The game's designers this time plan to make things more 'organic' and 'curvy', and thanks to the miracles of 3D acceleration under Direct3D, it will also have other new graphical effects, such as the now seemingly compulsory coloured lighting, fog and dynamic texturing. Having whizzed through a dungeon using some early code recently, we can tell you that *Dungeon Keeper II* has atmosphere by the bucketload, as well as a wicked sense of fun.

As far as gameplay goes, the adage 'If it ain't broke…' would seem to be appropriate, though fans of the original game may be left feeling a little short-changed by what is essentially a plush graphical update. Then again, Westwood have managed to pull it off with *C&C* with great success, so why shouldn't Bullfrog? PCZ





***Tiberian Sun*, the most eagerly awaited game of the year. Fact!**

COMMAND & CONQUER: TIBERIAN SUN

THE DETAILS

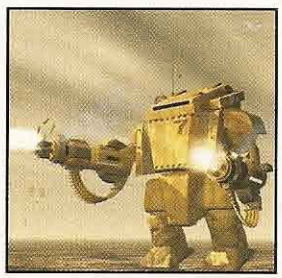
DEVELOPER Westwood Studios
PUBLISHER Virgin
OUT November '98
WEBSITE www.vie.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Brand-new sequel to the incredibly popular *Command And Conquer*
- New units, new graphics, new everything. But no boats this time

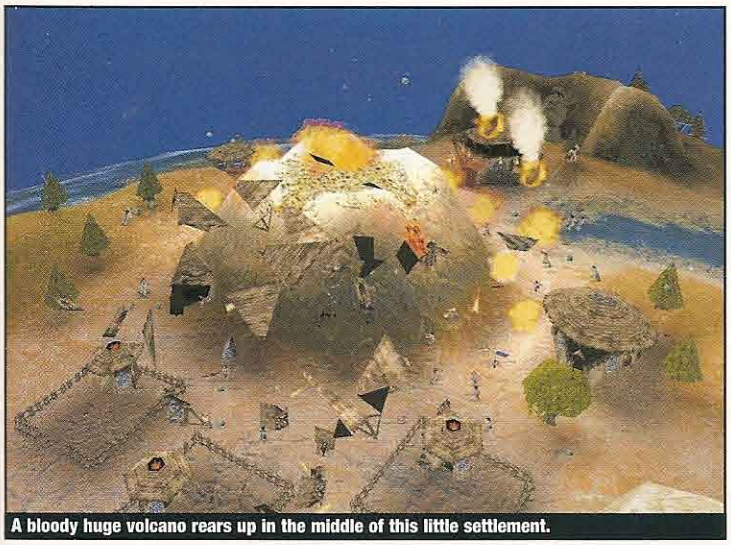
We share a timeless, sage-like wisdom here at *PC Zone*, which is why we've been healthily sceptical about *Tiberian Sun* ever since it was announced (see issue 63 for evidence). Can it hold its own against a legion of technically advanced *C&C* wannabes? Will the use of 'voxels' instead of polygons leave the game looking like a Teletext battlefield? Will we miss the naval units? Who's replacing Tanya? Those are just a few of the questions which swirl dizzily in our heads every time we peer at the screenshots. Now, having seen the game in action at E^3, we'd be lying if we said it looked revolutionary. It doesn't.

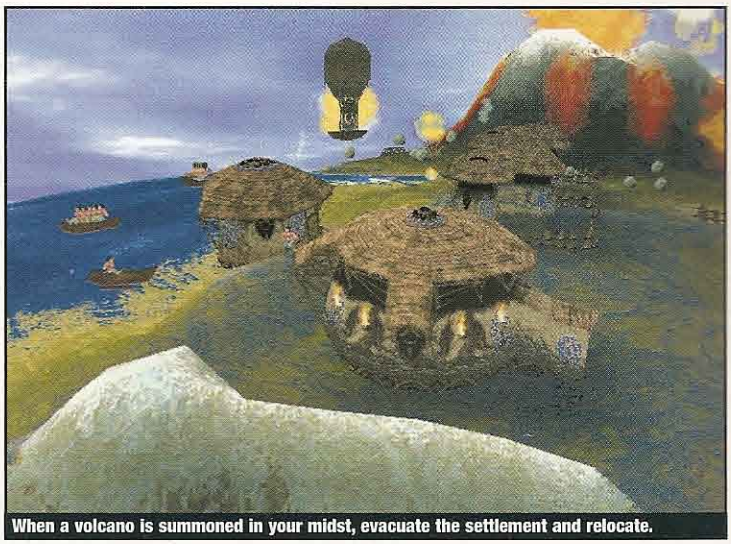
So we're riven with doubt. Yet we're also riven with certainty about two things. First and most importantly, we know it's going to be fun to play. And second? The final game will fly off the shelves so fast they may as well stick a rotor blade on the box and have done with it. PCZ





Fancy explosions and lush lighting effects feature in *Tib Sun*.


A bloody huge volcano rears up in the middle of this little settlement.


When a volcano is summoned in your midst, evacuate the settlement and relocate.

POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING

PCZONE TIP FOR THE TOP

The name's changed again, it's slipped to November, but anticipation remains high for the next title in the series

THE DETAILS

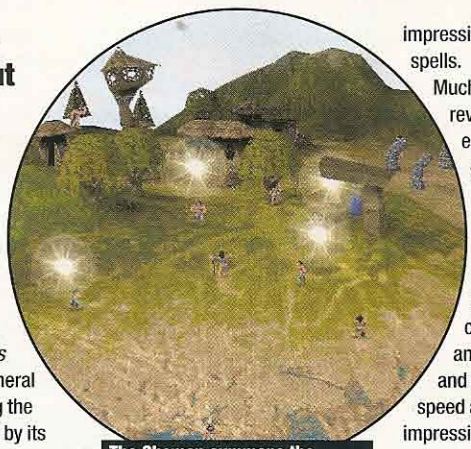
DEVELOPER Bullfrog
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
OUT November '98
WEBSITE www.ea.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- The ultimate in Spinney Rotatey 3D™ engines
- Tried and tested gameplay with loads of new twists

Eight years. That's how long it's been since Bullfrog unleashed the ever-so-popular *Populous* onto an unsuspecting general public, in effect spawning the whole 'God sim' genre all by its pretty little self. Some years down the line, to the present day, and we're not too far off the unveiling of their long-awaited third instalment in the series.

Populous: The Beginning, as it is now known, retains the essential gaming ingredients of its predecessors – such as the raising and lowering of land on which your tribesmen settle and co-exist, and the hilarious battles that ensue when contact is made with opposing forces – but with one major exception: instead of starting as a 'God', controlling the action from above, this time round you begin the game as a mortal (as a Shaman) and have to work your way up to a place in their lofty HQ by crushing the mortal opposition. The concept of the gameplay remains one of population growth and real-time combat. Again you will have to nurture an army from virtually nothing, overpower your opponents by whatever means available, and rain fire and brimstone down on them with an impressive array of powerful spells.

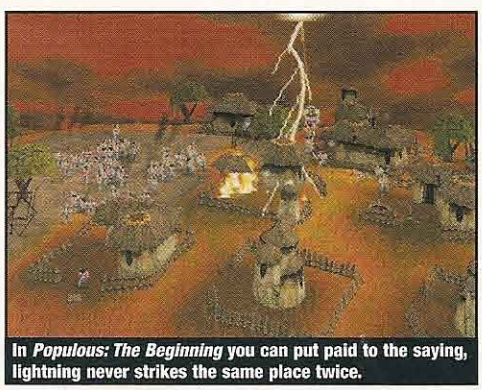

The Shaman summons the population for a great big party.

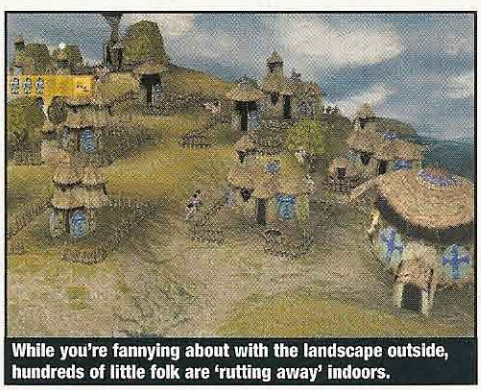
Much has been made of the revolutionary 'spherical' 3D environment on which the game unfolds – and with jolly good reason. To put it simply: *Populous: The Beginning* is one of the best-looking games ever created. The ever-changing globe rotates and spins, and zooms in and out with remarkable speed and realism, the impressive curvature extending into every aspect of the graphics, from the scaling of the characters to the lie of the land. New spells (Burn, Earthquake, Erode, Firestorm, Flatten, Ghost Army, Insects, Land Bridge, Lightning, Volcano, Whirlwind) turn visual cartwheels when called into effect. Huge swathes of land can crumble; seas boil – in glorious 3Dfx-accented manner. There's even a moody 'Martian' landscape punctuated by eerie purple lighting and weird fog effects. It really does have to be seen to be believed.

Populous fans can sleep soundly in their beds at night, safe in the knowledge that Bullfrog haven't wimped out when it comes to the gameplay side of things either. A refined mouse/keys control system enables easy manipulation of the tribe's Shaman and the finely bred brethren that follow her. Angels of Death, Warriors, Super Warriors, Braves and Preachers make their debut on that particular front, each with differing abilities and AI traits. Boats and skyships are also planned, adding that extra dimension to the already infallible concept.

Our favourite bit, though, is still Armageddon: the 'all-out war' command that pits your entire population against that of the enemy. Initiate this and the landscape morphs into a gigantic coliseum, ready for the impending battle. Arms flail, bodies fly into the air, and much hilarity is generated in the process. It seems Bullfrog still have that wicked sense of humour that we've come to know and love. PCZ


In some ways, the landscape behaves in a similar fashion to that seen in Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet*.


In *Populous: The Beginning* you can put paid to the saying, lightning never strikes the same place twice.


While you're fannying about with the landscape outside, hundreds of little folk are 'rutting away' indoors.


Star Wars meets *Command And Conquer*. Yes please.





FORCE COMMANDER

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER LucasArts
PUBLISHER Virgin
OUT November '98
WEBSITE www.lucasarts.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

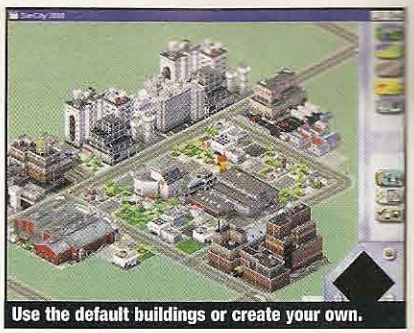
- For God's sake, man, it's a new *Star Wars* game. Have you no soul?
- LucasArts' first 3D accelerator-only game

After the disappointment of *Star Wars: Supremacy*, LucasArts are doubtless hoping to appease the strategic masses by releasing *Force Commander*, a *Command And Conquer*-influenced real-time wargame set in everybody's favourite fictional universe. Potential highlights include new *Star Wars* vehicles and spaceships, a bewildering supply of varied landscapes, and lots of weapons factories. All the game elements have been painstakingly constructed from hand-tooled polygons, and are held together with special computer glue.

Perhaps best of all, the game will feature some of the familiar battles and missions from the original *Star Wars* trilogy – such as the battle on the ice planet Hoth, from *Empire Strikes Back*. This is LucasArts' first venture into the world of real-time strategy, and they're clearly anxious to succeed. We're anticipating a 3D-accelerated orgy of non-stop militaristic manoeuvring. In space. They could've called it *Platoon On The Moon*.


Recognisable units from the movies will appear in the game.


Your favourite mayor 'em up is back.


Use the default buildings or create your own.

SIMCITY 3000

THE DETAILS

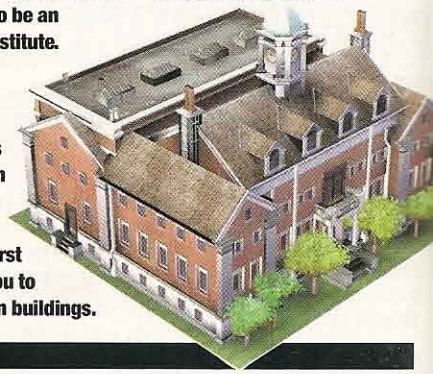
DEVELOPER Maxis
PUBLISHER EA
OUT November '98
WEBSITE www.simcity.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Highly addictive city management game
- Internet interaction for the first time

While many people may disregard the *SimCity* series as educational as opposed to entertainment software, there's no denying that building and maintaining your own city has proved a highly addictive pastime for gamers everywhere. This latest addition was originally intended to be a true 3D sim, but the programmers decided that today's technology was not advanced enough to power the living, breathing world they envisaged. However, the highly detailed rendered buildings that inhabit the latest game in the series appear to be an acceptable substitute.

The most notable innovation in *SimCity 3000* is the introduction of the Building Architect Tool, which for the first time enables you to create your own buildings. And with the introduction of the simCity.com **website, which gives gamers the opportunity to meet up and swap buildings and cities, the *SimCity* craze which has dominated PC gaming over the last few years is sure to erupt once again.**




Build remote-control tanks then go look for trouble.


Tanktics leans more towards combat than strategy.

TANKTICS

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER DMA Design
PUBLISHER Gremlin
OUT September '98
WEBSITE www.dma.co.uk

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Original, colourful and neat – potentially a huge amount of fun
- It isn't a first-person shoot 'em up

DMA Design's *Tanktics* – oft delayed but now reaching fruition – is still more than capable of raising an eyebrow or two here at the *PC Zone* offices, mainly because it still looks like being an original and fun twist on the real-time strategy genre.

Taking control of a heavy-duty anti-gravity crane in order to build an army of remote-controlled tanks (using raw materials collected from the three-dimensional polygon landscape), you must fight computer-controlled opponents for world domination in the single-player game, and against other people in the multiplayer version. The previously reported magnet-and-chain 'grabbing arm' has now been discarded, and a more manageable control system has been introduced, shifting gameplay emphasis over to combat rather than the building of the tanks themselves. We're still sweating in anticipation.

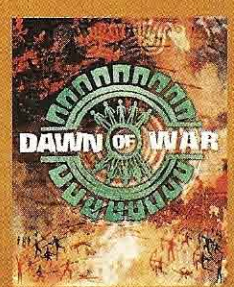


'UGH!'

DAWN OF WAR. RECRUITING NOW!

HE WANTS YOU... TO DO BATTLE IN THE FIRST STONE AGE STRATEGY GAME. FIGHT! FOR YOUR LIFE AGAINST MARAUDING DINOSAURS. CONTROL THE FORCES OF NATURE! CREATE LIGHTNING, VOLCANOES AND EARTHQUAKES TO DESTROY YOUR ENEMIES. WIN AND YOU SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH. LOSE AND YOU'RE PRE-HISTORY!

PC CD



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BEST SCRIPT

You play Andy. Your teacher hates you.
You're petrified of the dark.
Worse still, your best mate and faithful dog
Whisky is snatched away by the
Forces of Darkness. Nightmare.



BEST CASTING

Tooled up with a plasma gun, you embark on a brave rescue mission climbing, twisting, swinging and blasting your way through 8 huge 3-D Studio rendered worlds infested with monsters, phantoms and the Master of Darkness. You're not alone though. You've the Amigos to guide you.

PLAY YOUR PART IN THE EPIC ADVENTURE GAME THAT ECLIPSES ALL OTHERS.



BEST GAMEPLAY

An epic adventure six years in the making, Heart of Darkness seamlessly blends over 30 minutes of breathtaking movie animation with some of the most challenging gameplay ever seen on the PC. Immerse yourself into your role. Enter the Heart of Darkness.



BEST ANIMATION



BEST SPECIAL EFFECTS

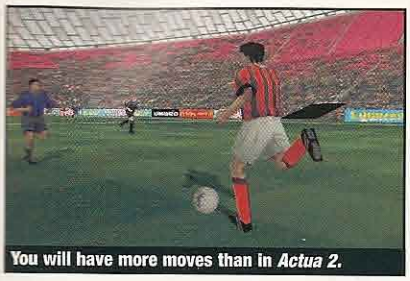
HEART OF DARKNESS
PLAY YOUR PART IN IT

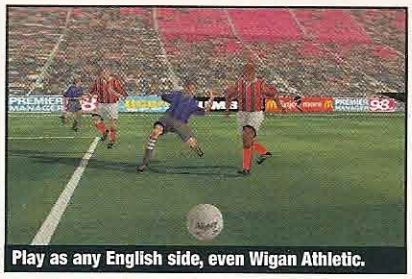
ocean

PlayStation

PC CD ROM

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You will have more moves than in *Actua 2*.


Play as any English side, even Wigan Athletic.

ACTUA SOCCER 3

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Gremlin
PUBLISHER Gremlin
OUT November '98
WEBSITE www.gremlin.co.uk

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Play as any team in the English league, including the shit ones

Gremlin have been keeping a low profile on the football front of late, avoiding the recent World Cup shootout and quietly getting on with the business of the third instalment proper of their successful *Actua* series which, as you can see from the accompanying screen shots, is looking pretty hot already. Gremlin have thoughtfully decided to include all the teams in the English league for the third series in the game, giving people like Steve Hill the opportunity to take Chester City to Premiership glory for the first time in their (and his) history. Flexible tournament editing is promised as is variable game speed, something sadly missing in previous footie games. At the E³ show, we were rewarded with an exclusive audience with the game, deep within a secret section of Gremlin's stand. The verdict? World Cup 98 may have some decent competition at last. PCZ



CM3 is one of *Zone*'s bright hopes for 98.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Sports Interactive
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
OUT October '98
WEBSITE www.eidosinteractive.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Complete reworking of original *CM* code.
- It's a whole new game!

Since the original *CM* came out five years ago, thousands of people have become helplessly addicted to one of the most immersive games ever. The 'all new' *CM 3* is the first real reworking of code for over two years, and promises a host of new features based on feedback from the army of dedicated fans the world over. As well as sporting a new, quicker engine, the developers have promised an even wider range of squads and players, the facility to develop tactics and training, more comprehensive player contracts, and new drop-down menus that enable you to compare players' stats and scan the massive database quickly and easily. There's also talk of reserve teams, man marking, performance-linked training, and even more player stats. Let's just hope they don't change it too much. PCZ

TIGER WOODS 99

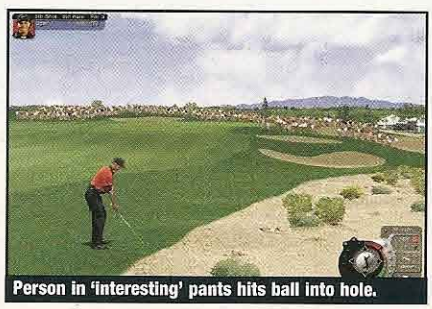
THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER EA Sports
PUBLISHER EA Sports
OUT summer '98
WEBSITE www.ea.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- A well-proven golf game gets a '90s presentation makeover
- A digitised Tiger Woods for your very own home. Don't say you haven't wanted one

With the acquisition of Tiger Woods, EA Sports' long-running *PGA Tour* line takes all the factors that have made it a success and injects a much-needed boost of '90s marketing power. You can play either as or against Leopard *(Tiger – Ed)*, or any of nine other golfing 'stars', all of whom have been recreated, from their individual swing characteristics to the floppiness of their hats. Panther *(Tiger – Ed)* also provides hints and advice through a series of 'Tiger Tips' (sounds like a brand of tea). You can play Cheetah *(Tiger – Ed)* on any of three real-life courses, all accurately rendered down to the length of grass on the fairways and the used condoms in the bunkers. Net support is provided via EA's SportsNet service, enabling up to 200 players to take part in tournaments. Who knows, maybe Puma *(Nike, er, I mean Tiger – Ed)* will even take part himself? PCZ


Person in 'interesting' pants hits ball into hole.

NBA LIVE '99

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER EA Sports
PUBLISHER EA Sports
OUT September '98
WEBSITE www.ea.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Incredibly realistic 3D players
- Expected to become the benchmark



NBA 99 looks the biz.

A recent sneak peek at this had us picking our jaws off the floor, such was the level of detail in the 3D-modelled players. 3Dfx acceleration obviously had a lot to do with that, though we're not complaining. As well as the usual options associated with the only officially-endorsed NBA game, *NBA Live '99* will come with an in-depth player editor, enabling you to customise everything from players' hair colour to height. EA Sports have also been brushing up on their AI programming too, so there'll be no moaning when computer-controlled players let you down in the heat of battle. PCZ

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER II

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Amazing Studios
PUBLISHER Virgin
OUT September '98
WEBSITE www.vie.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Superb visuals married with classic gameplay
- Exceptional attention to detail


Snooker in good-looks shock.

Coming from the "magic computer pen" of snooker sim maestro Archer MacLean, we covered this in issue 64. The early working title of *Q* has been jettisoned in favour of the celebrity-sanctioned moniker *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker II*. And yet snooker is only the half of it. This is a full-blown games room sim, with darts, fruit machines, draughts – even a fully working version of old-skool blaster Drop Zone hurled in for good measure. The attention to detail is amazing – MacLean is a self-confessed obsessive in this field – and helps create a quite unique atmosphere. PCZ

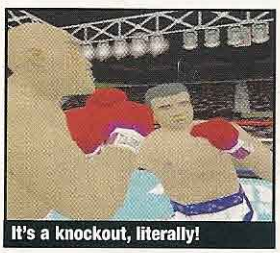
KNOCKOUT KINGS

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Press Start
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
OUT September '98
WEBSITE www.ea.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Thirty-eight genuine boxers from various periods
- Hundreds of motion captured moves


It's a knockout, literally!

Among the 38 fighters featured in *Knockout Kings* are Muhammad Ali, Evander Holyfield, Leon Spinks, Sonny Liston, Larry Holmes, Marvin Hagler, Sugar Ray Leonard, Oscar De La Hoya and Shane Mosley, the latter three of whom worked as consultants on this game and were motion-captured executing hundreds of moves. Fighters vie for the Championship belt in light, middle, and heavyweight classes, and each boxer's style, strength, weight, height, speed, reach, stamina, ring savvy and experience have been replicated. They even boast their own personalised soundtracks. PCZ

WORLD AIR POWER: ISRAELI AIR FORCE

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Pixel Multimedia
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
OUT September '98
WEBSITE www.ea.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- A selection of new and different planes comes as a welcome break from F22s and F/A-18s
- Designed almost entirely by real-life IAF pilots for maximum accuracy

Sick to death of flying F22s? Lord knows you should be. It seems like we've had nothing but F22 sims for the past two years (with the occasional F/A-18 thrown in for good measure). Well, finally someone has realised that there's more than just the American Air Force out there, and is giving us armchair pilots something new to play with. *WAP: IAF* deals not with one single plane, but with the entire Israeli Air Force, letting you fly F-4 Phantoms, Dassault Mirages, Kfirs and Lavis, as well as the more familiar F16s and F15s.

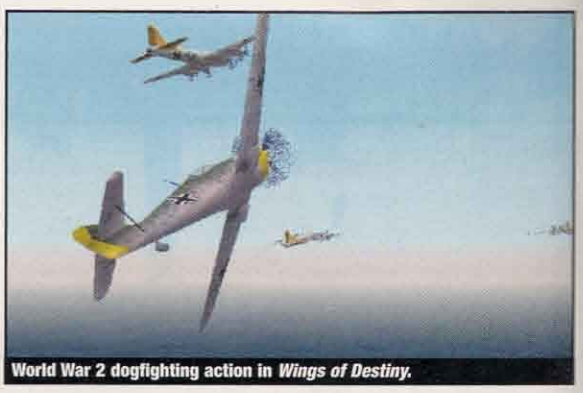
***WAP: IAF* sees you flying heated dogfights through the deep and twisting canyons of the Arab world, blowing apart the Middle East peace process across six hypothetical campaigns. Developed in Israel by IAF pilots, it promises accuracy to the nth degree, along with photo-realistic environments taken from satellite imagery and detailed to ten meters per pixel.** PCZ



***WAP:IAF* has photo-realistic environments.**



Fly all the planes from the Israeli Air Force.



World War 2 dogfighting action in *Wings of Destiny*.

WINGS OF DESTINY

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Psygnosis
PUBLISHER Psygnosis
OUT November '98
WEBSITE www.psygnosis.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Accurate flight dynamics and real-world physics
- Psygnosis' stock-in-trade stunning graphic quality

It's encouraging to see the WWII flight sim making a resurgence. Those classic – some might say beautiful – planes such as the Supermarine Spitfire and Messerschmitt 109s; the up close and personal dogfighting when seeing the whites of your enemy's eyes could be a real possibility; those US servicemen 'comforting' (ie porking) the good lady wives of RAF pilots who were busy over the skies of France and Germany.

All but that last element is recreated in *Wings Of Destiny*, giving you the chance to fly for either the Allied or Axis forces in either of the aforementioned aircraft or the American P51 Mustang or ME 262 (one of Germany's first jet-propelled aircraft and one of the best-looking planes ever). The sim boasts stunningly accurate flight models (but then don't they all?) and a total of 50 missions. Which was slightly fewer than in the real war, but what the hey. PCZ

FIGHTER SQUADRON

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Parsoft
PUBLISHER Activision
OUT September '98
WEBSITE www.activision.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Stunning graphics combined with previously unheard of realism
- WWII dogfighting is so much more than 'fire and forget'

Parsoft, the company responsible for the superb A-10 Cuba, have been working on *Fighter Squadron* for a couple of years now, and only recently has the game looked anything near comfortable running on your average-specced PC. As one of the many WWII combat flight sims due out before the end of the year (check *Wings Of Destiny*, *Combat Flight Sim* and *Fighter Legends*), *Fighter Squadron* will undoubtedly make an impression because of its 'active' landscapes, 'floating point' mathematical models (apparently much better than their 'integer' counterparts), stunning in-game visuals (including full 3D card support) and 'per polygon' vehicle damage, which adversely affects handling of the aircraft incrementally. As well as a wealth of multiplayer options, *Fighter Sqaudron* will also come with a fully enabled plane designer (called OpenPlane) and a drag-and-drop mission editor. Creators of challenging scenarios will be able to upload them to Activision's website to share with other enthusiasts. PCZ







The fourth in the *Falcon* series looks awesome.



OTT explosions alert.



FALCON 4

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER MicroProse
PUBLISHER MicroProse
OUT August '98
WEBSITE www.microprose.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- A flight sim series with a superb pedigree finally enters the '90s
- Dynamic campaigns, detailed training sessions and a customisable mission editor to ensure long-term appeal

Flight sims they come and flight sims they go, but few attain an all-time classic status in the same way that *Falcon 3.0* did. Astonishing technical detail, detailed flight models and (for the time) graphics, superbly realised campaigns and mission editors, and a flight training section that's still to be beaten for excellence.

It's taken some time, but finally MicroProse are giving us the sequel, retaining all the detail and complexity that made the previous title such a hit, but adding all the trappings of the '90s gaming world – 3D accelerator graphics, plenty of online and multiplayer support etc. The dynamic campaign builder and mission planners ensure plenty of lasting appeal, and thankfully the training aspect hasn't been neglected, with MicroProse enlisting the help of a US Air Force pilot who flew over Bosnia to guide players along and occasionally wig out as he has flashbacks to the horrors he's seen. PCZ

FIGHTER LEGENDS

Had enough of F22 and F/A-18 sims? So have we (until the next one, anyway). We take a look at a classier type of plane

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Jane's Combat Simulations
PUBLISHER EA
OUT Autumn 1998
WEBSITE www.janes.ea.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- One of the most detailed WWII flight sims for many a year
- A graphics engine that is not only state of the art today, but is also 'future-proofed' for future 3D acceleration technology
- Plenty of authentic era presentation and background material to capture the flavour of the period

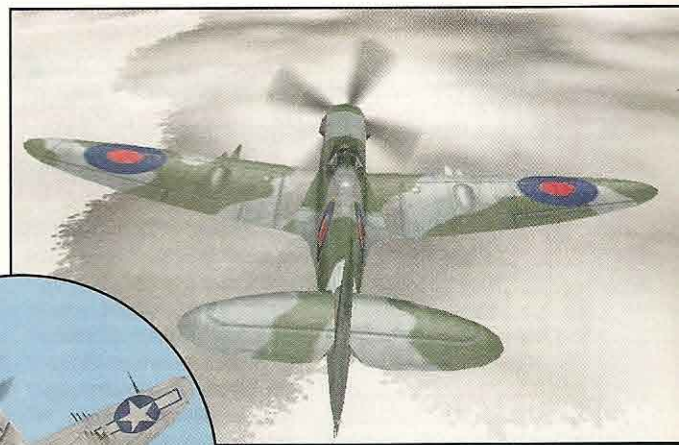
The world of the flight simulation has a habit of following popular trends with the kind of fervour that would give Chris Evans a headache. Take a look at all the F-22 simulators out there, littering the shelves like degenerate whores and all offering the same basic package except for only slight, superficial differences: "Young Asian F-22 here"; "Dominatrix F-22 looking for a willing slave"; "Horny F-22 redhead. Come on her flaps".

Fortunately there's a much classier bird being offered by Electronic Arts via their Jane's Combat Simulations brand. *Fighter Legends: Europe 1944* deals with that tumultuous period in Anglo-European relations, World War II (you remember, the second one the Americans were late for). Simulating seven of the era's most popular fighters, EA are banking on a combination of stunningly detailed graphics, highly accurate flight and world dynamics and a branching campaign system to draw your fickle attention away from the modern-day drudgery of afterburners and missiles up your tailpipe, and planes that are supposedly radar-invisible yet still seem to get you shot at on an alarmingly regular basis.

The planes on offer here include, for the Americans, the P-38 Lightning (not so much a plane, more a giant hole with wings), the P-51 Mustang (an American ego trip that was all engine and no style), and for the Germans the Bf 109 and the Focke-Wolf 190, the latter really only popular because it sounds vaguely rude. Meanwhile, we Britishers are stuck with the WWII staple Supermarine Spitfire; undoubtedly a fine aircraft, but when are we going to see some of the other British planes of the war, such as the Hurricane or the Mosquito (although personally I'd love to see a sim of the Vulcan from the late '60s and '70s)?

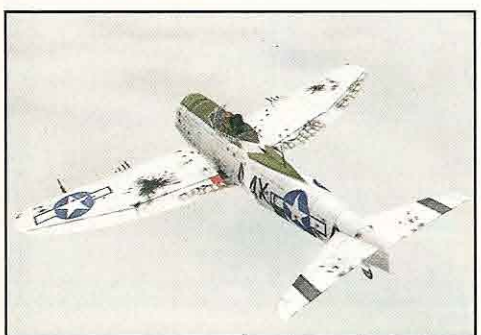
So far so good. But how do you, dear reader, fit into all this? Obviously an open-ended campaign system would have been too much for a game that is set during one of the largest battles since the Department of Justice knocked on Bill Gates' door and said: "About that browser..." Instead, *Fighter Legends: Europe 1944* uses a branching campaign that enables you to play on either side, takes into account the general timeline of the war, and gives you enough paths to travel to make sure that long-term appeal is retained. Appeal should also come from other areas, such as top-notch graphic quality, including some of the most detailed plane textures we've ever seen, and impressive visual effects such as smoke and fire erupting from engines, and planes breaking into pieces as they get damaged. The presentation is helped by authentic (for the period) sound and music effects, and even multimedia-style background information that includes interviews with a handful of veteran pilots.

EA are thoughtfully providing Internet support via their recently started Jane's Online Gaming Center (sic), a Net site devoted to playing the various Jane's sims online. It's all looking very smart and, along with *Wings of Destiny* (the Psygnosis WWII sim) and *World Air Power: Israeli Air Force*, will hopefully mark the start of exciting new directions for the flight sim genre. After all, the graphics surely can't get much better, can they? PCZ





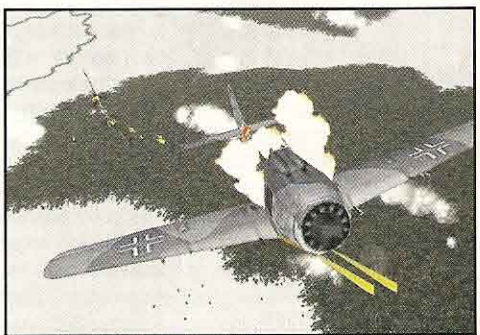
↑ Well there it is, the best plane ever built. Fills you with pride, doesn't it?
← The amount of texture detail is incredible.



Battle damage actually shows up as you get hit, enabling you to see just how bad you are at all times.



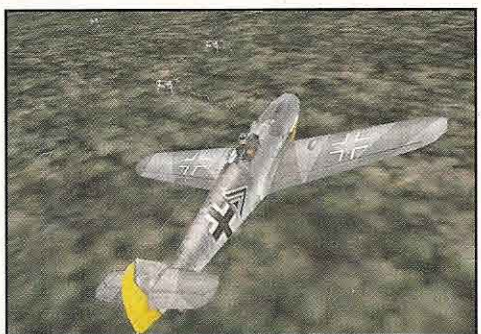
It's not all fighters; though you don't get to fly these huge mothers, just to escort them about their deadly business.



Hans discovers the perils of eating a curry just before a mission.



The battle was going well until the Germans employed early surrealism and started firing giant cotton wool balls.

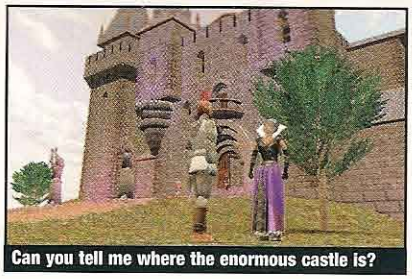


Ground detail is extensive, from trees to, er, cows.



3D virtual cockpits are on hand for each plane, each with fully working dials and instruments.


The Avatar fights alone in *Ascension*.


Can you tell me where the enormous castle is?

ULTIMA ASCENSION

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Origin
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
OUT Autumn '98
WEBSITE www.origin.ea.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Gorgeous graphics
- Massive 3D game environment

The ninth in the phenomenally successful *Ultima* series is almost upon us, and Richard Garriott (the games' designer) is determined to bring us the most comprehensive and immersive role-playing experience to date. *Ascension* will undoubtedly be the best-looking game in the series by some considerable margin with its flash 16-bit colour graphics, awesome 3D game environment and advanced lighting effects courtesy of Voodoo 2 and AGP. Our only concern about the game at this stage is the decision to give players control of a single character (the Avatar) as opposed to a group of characters. *Ultima 8* came in for criticism for exactly this reason, but judging from the early version of the game we've seen, Origin are almost certainly going to come up with the goods. This game, incidentally, is hotly-tipped by Chris to be one of the biggest hits of the year. Look out for our exclusive preview. PCZ

SOULBRINGER

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Gremlin Interactive
PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive
OUT TBC
WEBSITE www.gremlin.co.uk

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Great-looking top-down RPG
- More variety than *Diablo* and possibly even *Ascension*

While first-person RPG fans have plenty to keep them occupied with games like *Lands Of Lore 2* and *Might And Magic 6* (reviewed on page 114), those in favour of top-down RPG's like *Diablo* (*PCZ* #48, 88%) have been sadly neglected of late. Enter stage left *Soulbringer* which will have a far more sophisticated combat system than *Diablo* and a hell of a lot more besides.

Soulbringer features 50 highly detailed locations, over 100 characters to meet and interact with, and a myriad of weapons and magic spells. With *Diablo 2* and *Ultima Ascension* on the way around the same time, however, the scene is perfectly set for an exciting shoot-out between these would-be pretenders to the RPG throne. We've got to say *Soulbringer* looks a bit good even at this early stage, though. PCZ


***Soulbringer* will take on the mighty *Ultima Ascension* later this year.**


Creatures in *Diablo 2* have improved AI.

DIABLO 2

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Blizzard Entertainment
PUBLISHER Cendant Software
OUT December '98
WEBSITE www.blizzard.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- A larger, more detailed and defined role-playing world
- Ambitious Internet plans to rival *Ultima Online*

RPGs are even rarer than adventures – *Final Fantasy VII*, *Ultima IX* and... well that's about it as far as upcoming titles go. Those and *Diablo 2*, of course. The original was a bridge between RPGs and action games, but for the sequel Blizzard are making a more rounded role-playing experience.

For a start the world is far bigger, with a more focused story. You can also build highly personal characters with individual skills and abilities. The enemy have been given greater levels of intelligence and employ better tactics, rather than just wading in as before.

Online, Blizzard are hoping to do for online RPGs what *Ultima Online* did for online RPGs; a server-based world with rare and fabulous treasure to encourage more gaming and less hacking. (See last month's preview for details.) PCZ



FALLOUT II

THE DETAILS

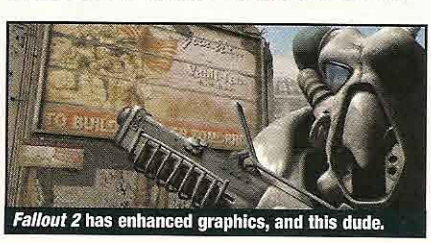
DEVELOPER Bioware
PUBLISHER Interplay
OUT November '98
WEBSITE www.interplay.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Over twice as big as first game
- Much improved artificial intelligence, combat and weapon balancing
- Even more sub-plots, weapons and NPCs to play with

Although *Fallout II* uses the same fixed view, tile-based engine, the sequel promises enhanced graphics and more detailed locations stretching over twice the area of the original. "We've listened to all the feedback we got from people about *Fallout* (*PCZ* #61, 91%) and have tried to implement as much as possible given the time we've got," explains *Fallout II*'s game's producer Eric Deville. "We've tweaked the control system, worked hard on the artificial intelligence and combat, and tried to give the player a more balanced environment to 'live' in."

As well as new melee combat, huge inventory system and more balanced weapons, you can expect an even more involving storyline that takes up the plot 50 years on from the original. The tweaks, along with the option to put together a band of up to six 'more intelligent' and skilled NPCs, should keep RPG fans happy until we see the likes of *Outcast* and *Ultima:* Ascension. PCZ


***Fallout 2* has enhanced graphics, and this dude.**

BALDUR'S GATE


Baldur's Gate's fantasy setting.


The game uses *AD&D* rules.

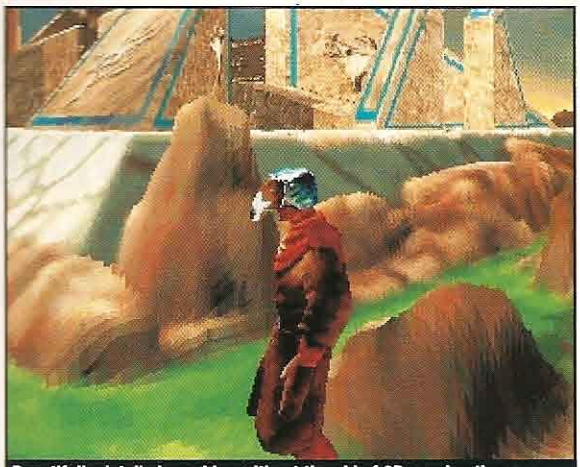
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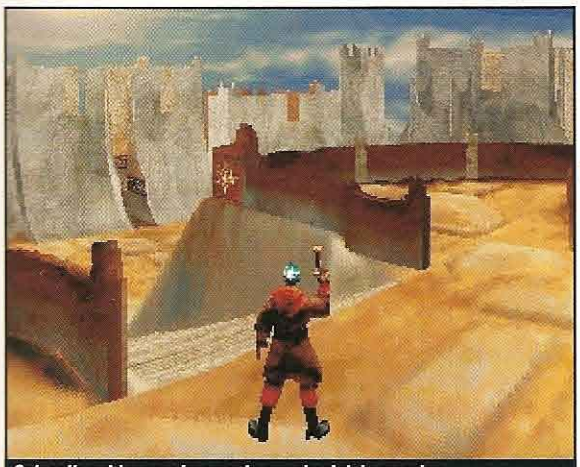
DEVELOPER Bioware
PUBLISHER Interplay
OUT October '98
WEBSITE www.interplay.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Sophisticated RPG based on the AD&D rule system
- Hundreds of characters to interact with

A traditional RPG based on the *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* world: *The Forgotten Realm*, *Baldur's Gate* looks set to go head to head with *Ultima Ascension* and *Diablo 2* when it is released later this year. The game features over 60 different monsters, including ogres and dragons, hundreds of NPCs to interact with, and fully rendered backgrounds (*Final Fantasy VII*, anyone?). You are given control of a party of six characters, each with distinctive abilities and personalites, and inter-party relationships 'evolve' the further you get into the game. Fans of the original *AD&D* game will be pleased to note that *Baldur's Gate* uses a real-time modification of the old *AD&D* system, and die-hard RPG traditionalists can force the game to play in turn-based mode if they want to; though why anyone would want to do that these days is completely beyond us. We'll let you know how *Baldur's Gate* squares up against distinguished competition when it comes out towards the end of the year. PCZ


Beautifully detailed graphics without the aid of 3D acceleration.


Outcast's outdoor environments are absolutely massive.


There are over 100 characters to interact with in the game.

OUTCAST

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER I-Motion
PUBLISHER Infogrames
OUT October '98
WEBSITE www.infogrames.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Bold and exciting visual style
- Massive playing area with hundreds of characters
- From the creators of the classic *Alone In The Dark* games
- Incredible graphics without a 3D card

"I can't believe it's not 3D accelerated," you'll cry, when you get your first eyeful of *Outcast*. Take it from us – it's a blinder

"Welcome to the sauna room, gentlemen," croaked one of the Infogrames henchmen as we shambled into the *Outcast* preview hutch at this year's E³ show.

He wasn't wrong. It was sweltering in there – perspiration city. Outside, the streets of Atlanta were bleached by the sizzling heat, but we hadn't witnessed so many sweaty foreheads in one place since watching *Fire Station Jizz War IV* on the hotel in-house cable channel the previous morning.

"The game really does look like a playable 3D comic strip, with a roving camera following the lead character"

The henchman pointed at the screen. "What you're about to see is running without a 3D accelerator card," he announced. And within 30 seconds we'd forgotten all about the oppressive humidity of our surroundings. We just stood there and stared.

Outcast is a 3D science-fiction adventure game with a visual style that lingers somewhere between that of Roger Dean (the king of '70s record covers, best known for the *Yes* albums) and Carlos Ezquerra (Mr *2000AD*). The underlying engine is jaw-dropping: the game really does look like a playable 3D comic strip, with a roving camera following the lead character and occasionally framing the action for maximum dramatic effect.

The action follows the exploits of one Cutter Slade, a gung-ho hotshot who's been sent through a black hole into a parallel universe in order to rescue the members of an exploration party who've been ominously failing to report back to base. Success depends upon Cutter's ability to traverse, explore and survive in this bizarre alternate reality.

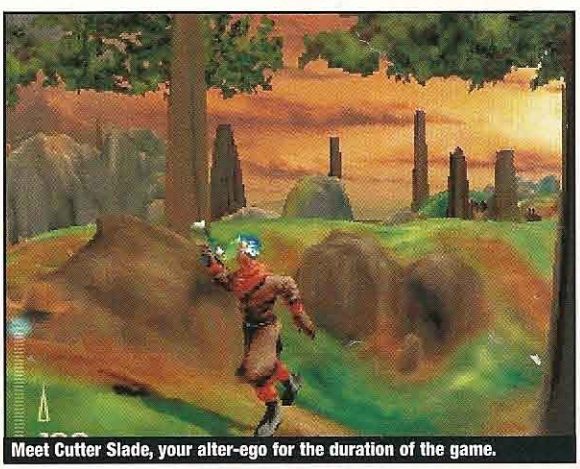
And what an alternate reality it is: we're talking about the reproduction of entire planets here. Cutter can literally walk his way around a globe – and then another, and another. The playing area is breathtaking in scale, stretching as far as the eye can see, with nary a drop in frame rate to speak of. *Outcast* makes the immense outdoor sections of *Unreal* look positively claustrophobic by comparison.

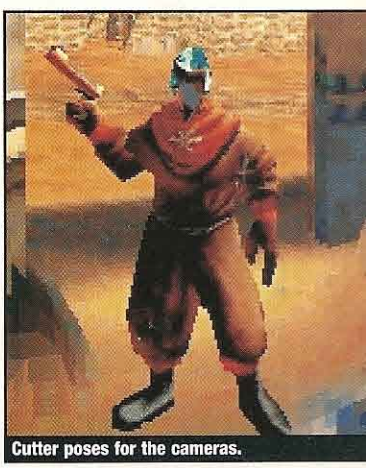
How is this graphical majesty achieved without the benefit of an accelerator card? One word: voxels (the 3D equivalent of a 2D pixel). They may make the game look a tad 'blocky', but when they produce visuals as gorgeous as these, we'll forgive them. Their use isn't merely confined to the scenery: each character is constructed from up to 20 voxels. To give you a sense of scale, there are 24 million voxels used per planet. This is a big game.

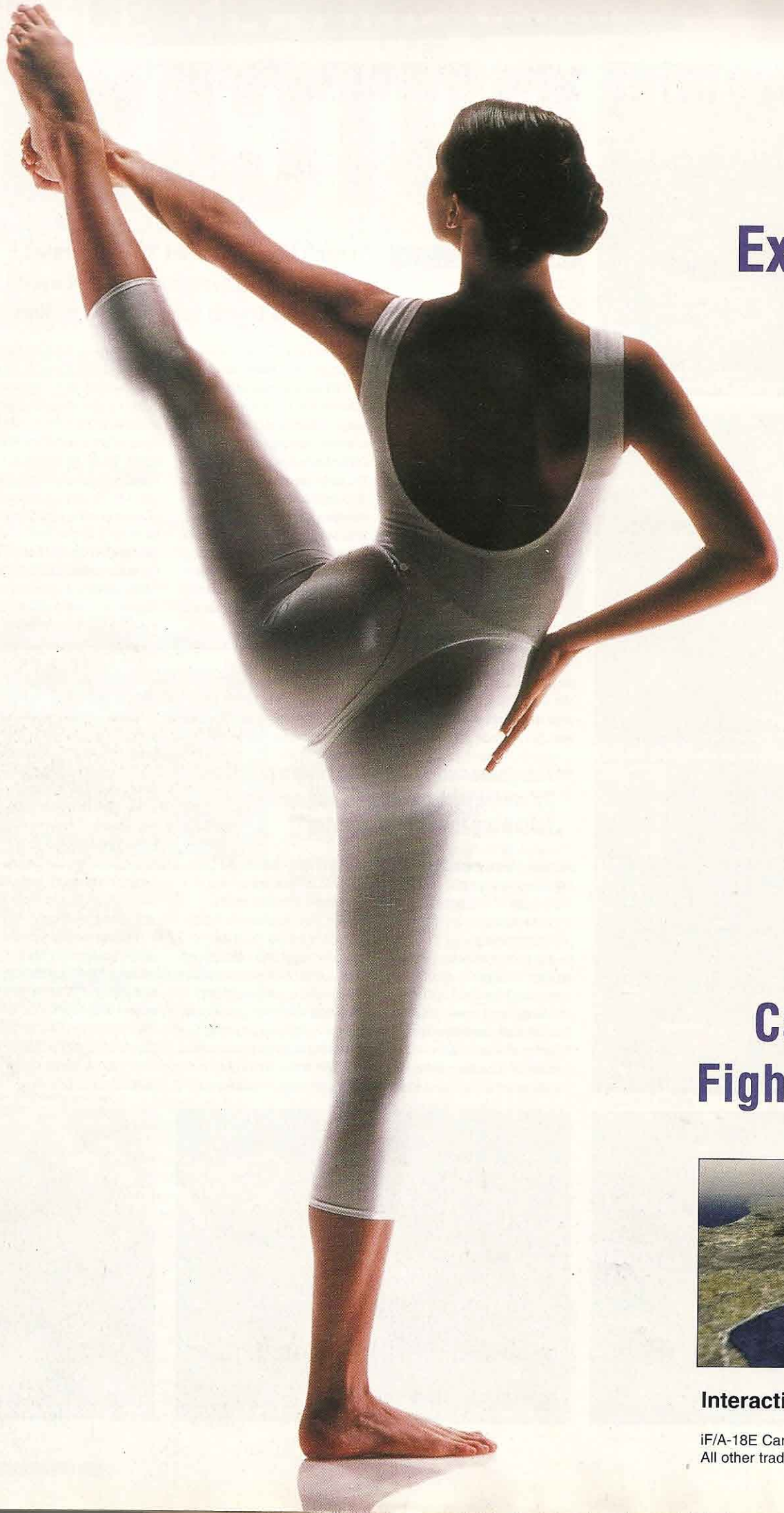
Interaction is also of great importance. A high-falutin' artificial intelligence routine known as GAIA is used to ensure that each character – and, by extrapolation, the entire society – behaves in as 'realistic' a manner as possible. And if you want to test it out, why not try going a bit bonkers with one of the game's 24 weapons (some of which would be rejected by Saddam Hussein for being "too destructive"), just to watch them start diving for cover?

Outcast has the potential to be almost unstoppably huge. If what we saw in that dank, sweaty room is anything to go by, PC games players with a hankering for adventure are in for a veritable orgy of sheer digital indulgence. Watch this space for further developments. PCZ


Blimey, that camel looks a bit, er, French.


Meet Cutter Slade, your alter-ego for the duration of the game.


Cutter poses for the cameras.



Years o
Tota
Exactly wha

Fact: A woman

Carrier Strik
Fighter iF/A-18



Interactive Magic, Gingers Cou

iF/A-18E Carrier Strike Fighter, TALON, DEMO
All other trademarks are the property of their res

dedicated training and strict discipline.
concentration and perfect balance.
you would expect of a U.S. Navy fighter pilot.

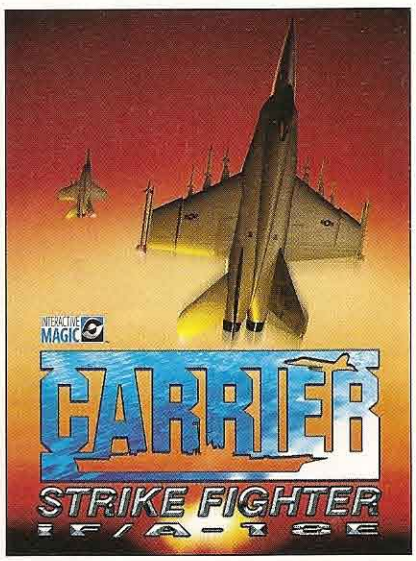
ody is better equipped to withstand the pressures of G-Force.

In training, every sinew in your body has been stretched to breaking-point, every move meticulously choreographed to ensure you are in the right place at the right time. Every joint in your body has been pounded hour after hour attempting a landing of perfect balance and precision.

But nothing prepares you for the sheer, gut-wrenching, thrill of being 'Cat-Shot' skyward, throttle fully open, from the deck of an aircraft carrier, or the tension of coming into land in stormy weather, as with nerves of steel and immaculate precision you hook up to the wire on deck.

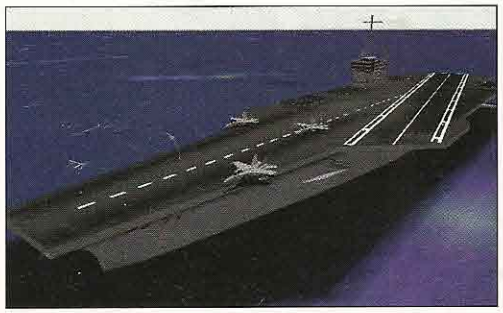
Built around the high-tech avionics, radar and stealth technologies of the newest tool in the U.S. naval aviation arsenal, gameplay features include:

- The famous DEMON™ terrain engine, combining satellite imagery with Digital Elevation Models based on real-world data, create amazingly life-like, non-repeating terrain.
- Fully dynamic campaign generation; the TALON™ Campaign System ensures every mission will be unique and unpredictable with unrivalled depth and realism.
- Fully functional, point-and-click Active Cockpit with state-of-the-art avionics.
- Fly as Mission Commander or opt for the more advanced Squadron Commander and make tactical planning decisions.
- Single player, modem and network support - fly solo missions or declare war on your friends!



The rehearsals are over. It's time to perform.







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OBSESSED WITH ONLINE QUAKE

In our regular section on people who are passionate about games and would happily spend every waking moment at their PC, we meet Sujoy Roy – one of the best *Quake* players in the world

WORDS David McCandless **PHOTOS** Simon Clay

CASE HISTORY



#2 THE ONLINE QUAKE GAMER

NAME Sujoy Roy

AGE 22

LOCATION Cambridge

OCCUPATION Physics student and one of the best *Quake* players in the world

OBSESSION Amassing frags in online *Quake*

CONDITION BEGAN Sometime back in 1994

HISTORY OF CONDITION Obsessive compulsion to kill people in a virtual sense, derives self-esteem from said act, exhibits physiological and psychological distress during withdrawal

OUTLOOK Terminal but lucrative

Computers mean different things to different people. To most, a computer's a scary box of wires within which 'magic' things happen. To others it's a functional device, a tool used to perform a variety of helpful tasks. To a growing number of people it's an entertainment system, for playing games and socially interacting on the Net. And then there's another group entirely: to them the PC is everything. Without it they would be lost. It is the centre of their world. And with it as a springboard, they have propelled themselves from casual use to an all-consuming passion...

"Bump into Sujoy online and he'll probably shoot you in the face with a double-barrelled shotgun, and then use a rocket against your carbonised corpse to explode what's left of you into a pack of squealing newbies, lightning-gun blazing"

The time is 9:45am. Sujoy Roy wakes from a catatonic slumber and, in one swift movement, is sitting at his PC, typing. His desk is a graveyard of empty Coke cans and Wheat Crunchy wrappers. He bounces merrily into an IRC online chat room and is welcomed by the 20 or so grizzled veterans who are already there, busily swapping expletives. In the background, Sujoy fires up *Quake* and the morning air is suddenly filled with the beautiful song of rocket launchers and shotguns.

UNHEALTHY ADDICTION

It's just a morning like many others for one of the best *Quake* players in the world.

At lunchtime, he'll maybe stop to grab a shower and something to eat. At six o'clock he'll still be at his PC to welcome phone bill watchers and a new wave of gamers who have finished work for the day with his rocket launcher. And by three or four in the morning, as the UK winds down, he'll be ambushing fresh young Americans as they log on, oblivious to the danger.

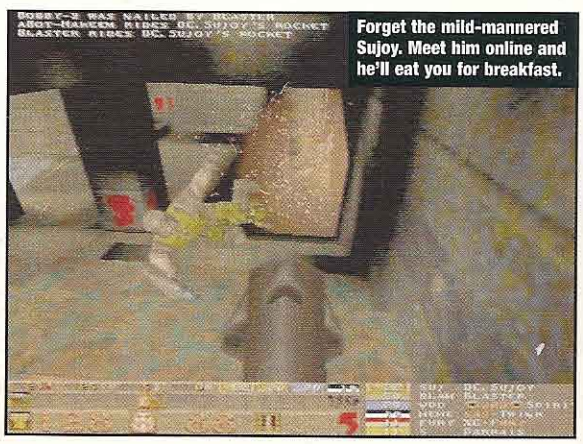
"I love it. I just can't stop playing it."

At 22, Sujoy Roy looks like a normal Cambridge student. He's friendly, softly spoken, mild-mannered and very modest. Bump into him online, however, and he'll probably shoot you in the face with a double-barrelled shotgun, and then use a rocket against your carbonised corpse to explode what's left of you into a pack of squealing newbies, lightning-gun blazing. By the time your bloodied, decapitated head bounces on the cobblestones, he will have executed a good five *Quake* players and blurred off in search of fresh blood.

Sujoy is studying physics at Downing College, Cambridge – a demanding four-year course for the greatest aspirant intellects in the country, requiring immense study, scholastic endurance and discipline. Not a course for a *Quake*head.

"I got a First in my first-year exams," says Sujoy with a giggle. "Then I discovered *Doom* and got a Second. The next year I was playing *Quake* and got a Third. This year I'll just pass. Just."

When Sujoy started playing *Doom*, he didn't even use a mouse and is quite happy to admit he was "awful". Rubbish, even. The next year he and his pals got hold of *Quake* at the

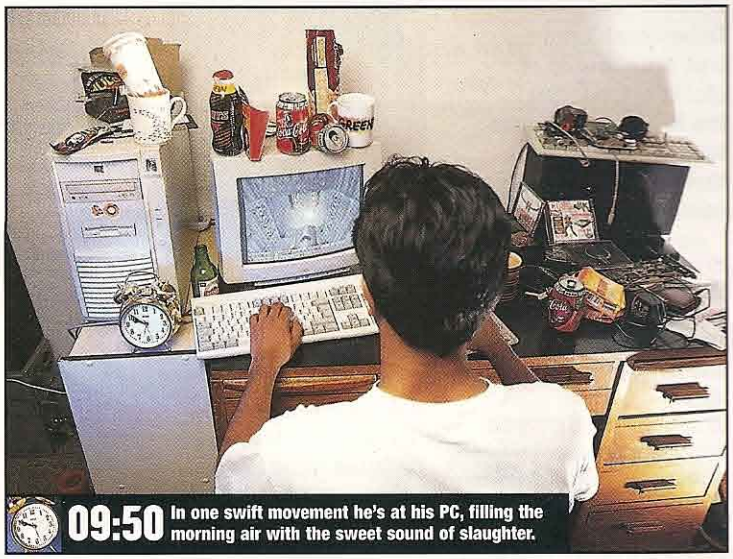


Forget the mild-mannered Sujoy. Meet him online and he'll eat you for breakfast.

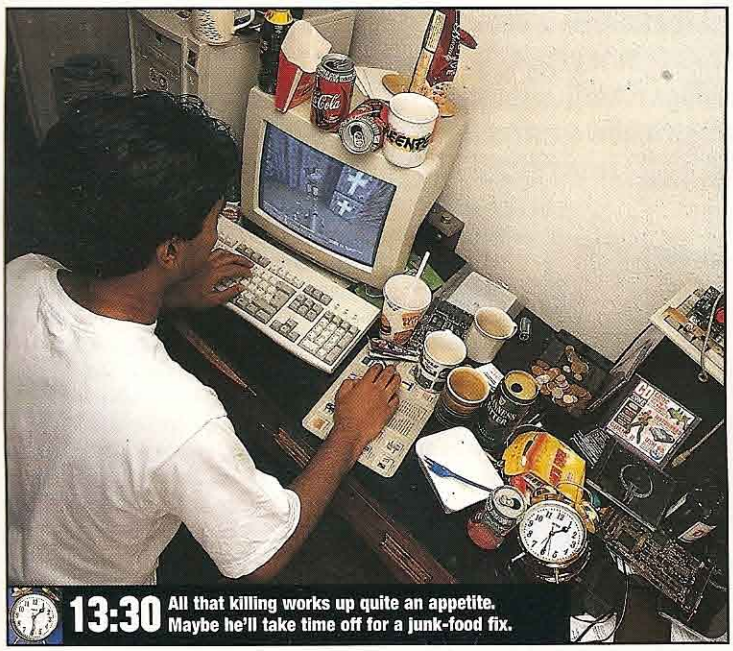
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A QUAKE ADDICT



09:45 Sujoy awakes from a catatonic slumber... he looks so harmless when he's sleeping, doesn't he?



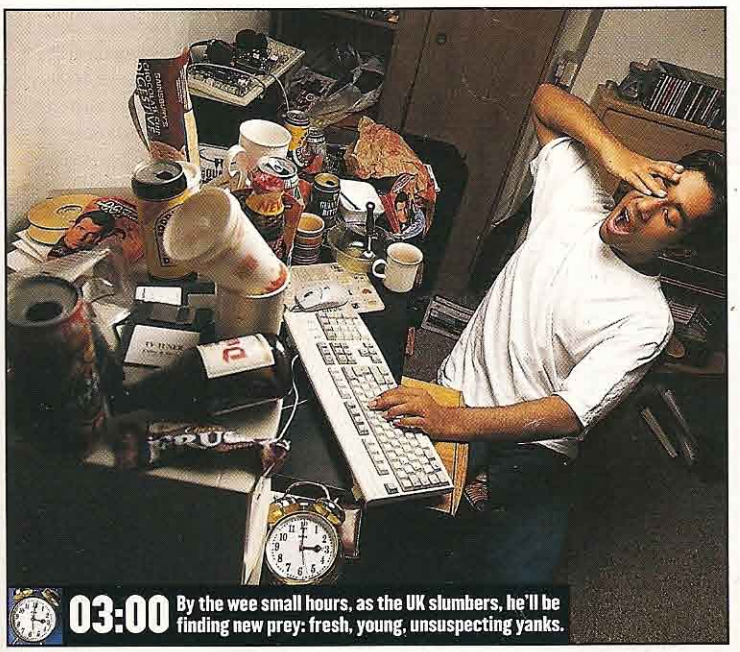
09:50 In one swift movement he's at his PC, filling the morning air with the sweet sound of slaughter.



13:30 All that killing works up quite an appetite. Maybe he'll take time off for a junk-food fix.



18:00 At six o'clock he's still online, ready to greet a new wave of gamers... with his rocket launcher.



03:00 By the wee small hours, as the UK slumbers, he'll be finding new prey: fresh, young, unsuspecting yanks.

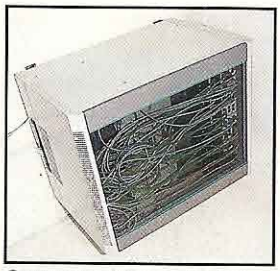


05:00 By 5am he's asleep at last – and dreaming of *Quake* (the dreams stop eventually, so he reckons...).

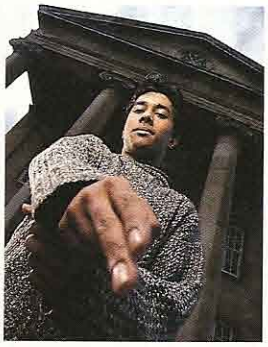
QUAKE LINGO

To be considered a true practitioner of *Quake* art, commit the following phrases to memory and use them liberally in polite conversation

CAMPER Someone who simply lurks around a powerful weapon picking up easy kills.
FRAG A kill, a death – the only currency of any worth in *Quake*.
HPB (HIGH PING BASTARD) Someone who moans constantly about the slowness of their Internet connection and blames all their mistakes on it.
LAMER A general term of derision.
LPB (LOW PING BASTARD) Someone who has a very fast connection to the Internet and so dominates a game.
ROCKET JUMP A trick worked out by avid *Quake* players which even surprised the makers of the game. By firing the rocket at the ground and jumping, players can propel themselves to impossible heights, defying the architecture by taking massive shortcuts.
QUAD WHORE Someone who hangs around the Quad damage power-up, grabs it, goes on a riot of destruction, then returns just in time to pick it up again ad nauseam.



The Internet connection that spawned Cambridge's *Quake* fever.



"After three or four months and nearly 10,000 kills, Sujoy found himself ranked Number One in Europe"

Cambridge University: a picturesque backdrop – for mass slaughter.

same time that the delightful Cambridge college authorities decided to instigate their 'port per dorm' policy. The result was – as Max from *Hart To Hart* would tell you – "murder".

"We got back from holiday and every room had a direct connection to the Internet," remembers Sujoy. "It was great. You could just plug your machine into the wall and you had the fastest connection possible."

The Cambridge dons didn't know what they were letting themselves in for. By providing every room with a fast Internet connection they weren't broadening their students' horizons or giving them seamless access to unlimited resource tools – they were spawning a generation of terrifying *Quake*lords, ÜberFragMeisters who would roam the electronic wilderness, obliterating and pillaging any *Quake* server they could find.

Or something like that.

Sujoy spent many evenings homicidally touring the country's servers killing thousands, but it wasn't until the first version of *QuakeWorld* came out that Sujoy began to realise he was "quite good".

"Everyone in the world was ranked," he recalls. "The more you played, the more people you killed, the less you were killed – it all added up to your overall score on this huge scoreboard."

The scoring system stoked the embers of competitiveness on the UK *Quake* scene. Literally overnight, a helpful chatty community which had previously lent a hand to newbies and trained up the less skilful, had become a murderous free-for-all, a ruthless bloodbath, a mindless quest for frags. And, after three or four months and nearly 10,000 kills, Sujoy found himself ranked Number One in Europe.



Sujoy's got his phone bill down to a mere £150 a month!
Strangely enough, his girlfriend tolerates – just – his obsession.

People started taking interest.

"So, what's your name?"

"Sujoy Roy."

"And your real name?"

"Sujoy."

"No, no. In real life."

"Yeah, it's Sujoy. Sujoy Roy."

"Yeah, of course it is. What is it – Barry or something?"

"No, it's Sujoy Roy."

"Jesus."

Sujoy had a genuine name to match his abilities. Others, alas, were not so fortunate; the names Ben, Mike and Sharon were unlikely to strike fear into the hearts of their opponents. "Oh no, it's Cameron and Nigel! Run!" is not a cry you hear very often in sci-fi films. As a result, nicknames like Coerj, Ettu, Fragger, Reaper, Lord DeathAngel Of The Planet Ikillyou became common.

UNITED EUROPE? NO CLAN DO

It was at about this time that the clan scene sprung up. Every night, on thousands of servers around the world, armies of *Quake* nutters gathered to kill and be killed. And the fibre-optic SuperJanet network – supposedly providing the academic world with fast access to the Internet – became the backbone of the UK *Quake* scene.

Sujoy has his own clan, called Demonic Core – although he insists he's no star player. "Team play is all about tactics and strategies, area domination and being clever." The ten-strong outfit practises twice a week against a rival 'ally' team, and is up there in the UK clan league alongside other five star clans such as QPD and Fallen Angels.

It's all delightfully competitive and tribal. The kind of issues governments used to send naïve young men to fight over and be slaughtered for have now been transplanted to the 'electronic battlefield' (note: please only use that phrase if you want to be labelled a ponce). Take, for instance, last year's clash – UK versus Sweden – a kind of Eurovision *Quake* Contest.

It was technically the first war between two European countries since 1945. A true battle of blood, sweat and tears. Like a fleet of rusty battleships amassing to take on the Deathstar, the UK team had fielded a ragtag group of obsessives, connecting variously via modem, ISDN and the SuperJanet academic network. It was a chance for the UK to get their own back on Sweden for Aqua. And maybe A-ha as well.

But everything went wrong.

"We should have played on a neutral server in Germany or something," commented one player after the match.

"A lot of stuff happened, but it wasn't what you'd call blatant cheating," Sujoy explains graciously.

It had been arranged to start at 8pm GMT. Two hours had been wasted while referees at both ends tried desperately to remove cheats from the Swedish players, who had hacked the game code to make themselves invisible – all bar a pair of floating eyes. Stylish.

Then, five minutes into the game, Sujoy was mysteriously kicked out and the connection became terrible. The UK team's ping times sky-rocketed. The off-shoot: the UK was hammered, 1250 kills to 312. There was plenty of bad feeling both on and off the 'pitch' and much heated discussion afterwards on IRC, but on the whole most people felt the game had been won fairly and squarely – technology obstacles aside.

Nevertheless, there still remains a special reserve of 'bad feeling' for the "cheating Swedes" – something which may be rectified when the first global Net meet happens this summer in Sweden. Until then, the UK's sterling *Quake* force has gone on to be a major contender in the unofficial 'Five Nations'





Hey, 24-hour death and destruction is thirsty work, as Sujoy's extensive collection of beer cans testifies.

INTRODUCING THRESH...

Sujoy versus Thresh – the world-beating *Quake* clash we're all waiting for?

The first time Thresh played in a tournament he made someone cry. High up on a flood-lit stage in the Microsoft ballroom in Redmond in 1995, he was smacking someone around on network *Doom*. Solid, expressionless and powerful, he had silenced the drunken microserfs in the audience with his relentless reflexes. On two huge video walls, he steadily pummelled Merlock, a moccasin-wearing *Doom* player from Minneapolis, into submission.

Predictably, over in the States entrepreneurial enthusiasts have taken what we treat as a hobby, shined it and renamed it a "sport" – or worse, a "cybersport". Sponsored leagues like the PGL (Professional Gamers League) and the CyberAthletes have kick-started with $1000 prizes and various commercial tie-ins. Twenty-year-old Thresh (real name: Dennis Fong) is a star player for the PGL and last year won John Carmack's red Ferrari Testarossa in a competition.

Thresh is considered to be the best *Quake* player in the world – despite the fact he's never played in Europe. However, he's planning to attend a massive Net meet in Sweden. He'd better watch out – Sujoy is already in training...

tournament currently going on around you while you browse the Internet. Scotland, Wales, France, England and Ireland are fielding their best ninjas to compete – and in the pre-tournament friendlies, England are looking good.

Most of this summer's weekends are going to be taken up by Net meets, gatherings of young, pale *Quake* obsessives in Birmingham, Leeds, Southampton and Ireland. Sujoy recently attended one at The Playing Fields, a gaming café in London's West End. He had turned up to organise a *Quake* tournament but found himself, as per usual, dragged into playing by his adoring fans, many of whom look like their mums would burst in at any minute and tow them away by the ear.

"By providing every room with a fast Internet connection, the university was spawning a generation of terrifying Quakelords, ÜberFragMeisters who would roam the electronic wilderness, obliterating and pillaging any *Quake* server they could find"

"Hah, not quite," he laughs. "Some people do come up to you nervously and are like: 'Oh, it's you.' But, despite all the petty squabbling online, I've never met anyone in real life I haven't liked."

REALITY BITES

But the obsessive spirit of the community has not been without its casualties. The legendary, mysterious Fragger, one of the best *Quake* players of his generation, abruptly disappeared from the scene last year. Everyone was puzzled until the story came out: the 17-year-old gamesplaying savant had apparently racked up an enormous £1300 quarterly phone bill from his habit and his parents had banned him from playing.

"Yeah, I've had £500 phone bills when I've been using my modem at home," says Sujoy. "But I've got it down to about £150 per month now, which isn't too bad."

And if it isn't a telephone number-sized telephone bill which thwarts your online *Quake* obsession, it's perhaps that other time-guzzling pastime, the girlfriend. Not an imaginary one who 'lives in Canada', but a real one. Contrary to the stereotype, Sujoy Roy has a nice, real girlfriend.

"She hates *Quake*. She hates me playing it. Luckily though, she's a lawyer in London, so I only see her once every two weeks or so. I sometimes have to pretend I don't play *Quake* as much as I do."

With college about to terminate, Sujoy already has an IT job lined up in a posh bank in London. Obviously, he'd prefer to play games for a living, and he's already on the way to getting sponsorship interest from modem manufacturer Pace, and others.

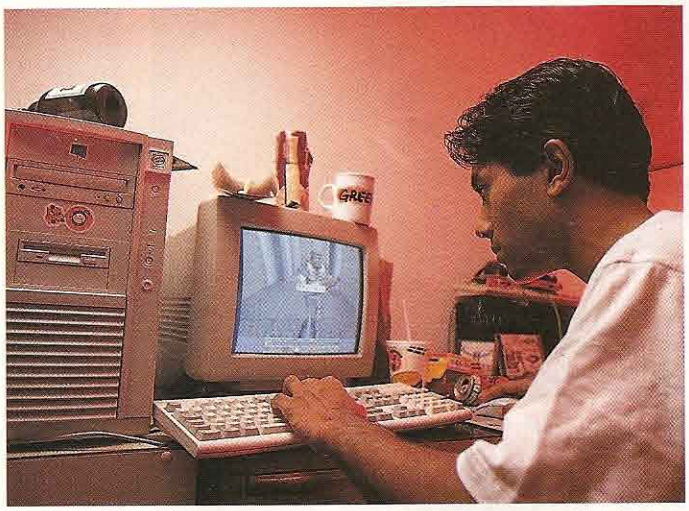
"The dreams have stopped now," says Sujoy. "When I first started playing *Quake* I would dream about it all the time. But they disappear after a while, don't they?"

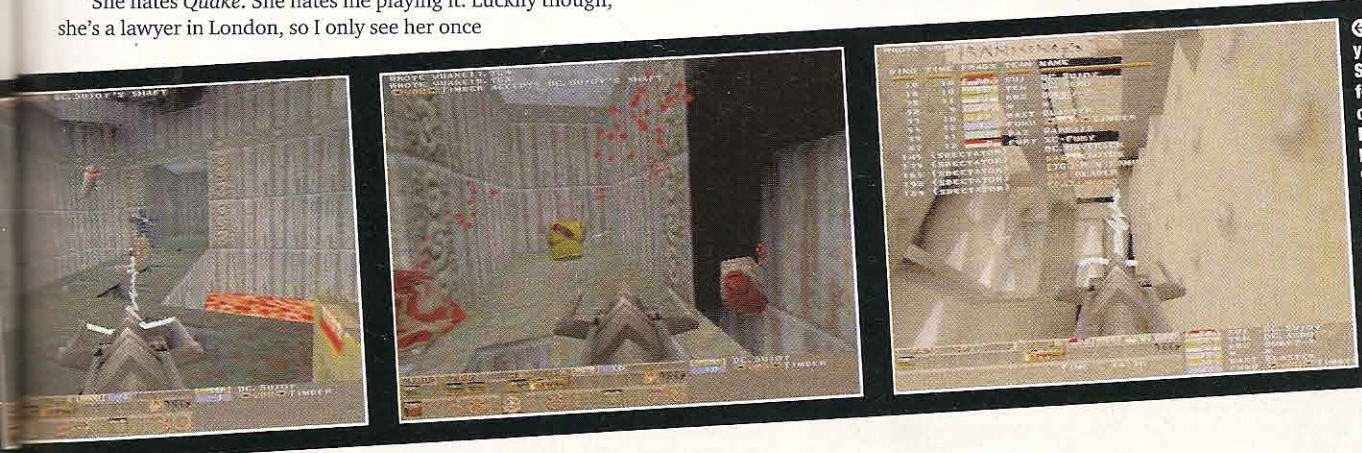
Do they? PCZ

INTERNET ADDRESSES

Quench your thirst for online gaming by checking these out

THE PLAYING FIELDS
www.theplayingfields.co.uk
SHOOT'N'SURF
www.shootnsurf.co.uk
SUJOY'S HOMEPAGE www.sujoy.com
DEMONIC CORE
www.demonic.demon.co.uk
FALLEN ANGELS
www.fallenangels.co.uk
QPD www.barrysworld.com/qpd
PGL www.pgl.com
CYBERATHLETES
www.cyberathletes.com


Public Health Warning: playing too much online *Quake* can seriously damage your social life (and your chances of passing your exams).


Watch out if you're online – Sujoy's ready for you with his own clan called Demonic Core. He claims to be "no star player" but we wouldn't trust him for a minute – this is the guy who's been ranked Number One in Europe, for heaven's sake!

PLAYER POWER-UP

Sick and tired of underwhelming gameplay, bad design and bug-filled software, gamers are in revolt via the Net, and are starting to make a real difference to the software we'll all be playing in the future. *Adam Phillips* reports

CASE 1 FREE 3Dfx SUPPORT FOR *BATTLECRUISER: 3000*



The new, improved and free version of *Battlecruiser: 3000AD:* now with 3Dfx support. Looks pretty impressive, doesn't it.

CASE 2 THE FLIES IN *QUAKE II*



As well as improving the single-player experience for *Quake II* after gamer criticism of *Quake*, player tests reduced the number of flies buzzing around slain monsters.

CASE 3 *SHADOW WARRIOR*'S KUNG-FU VOICE OVER

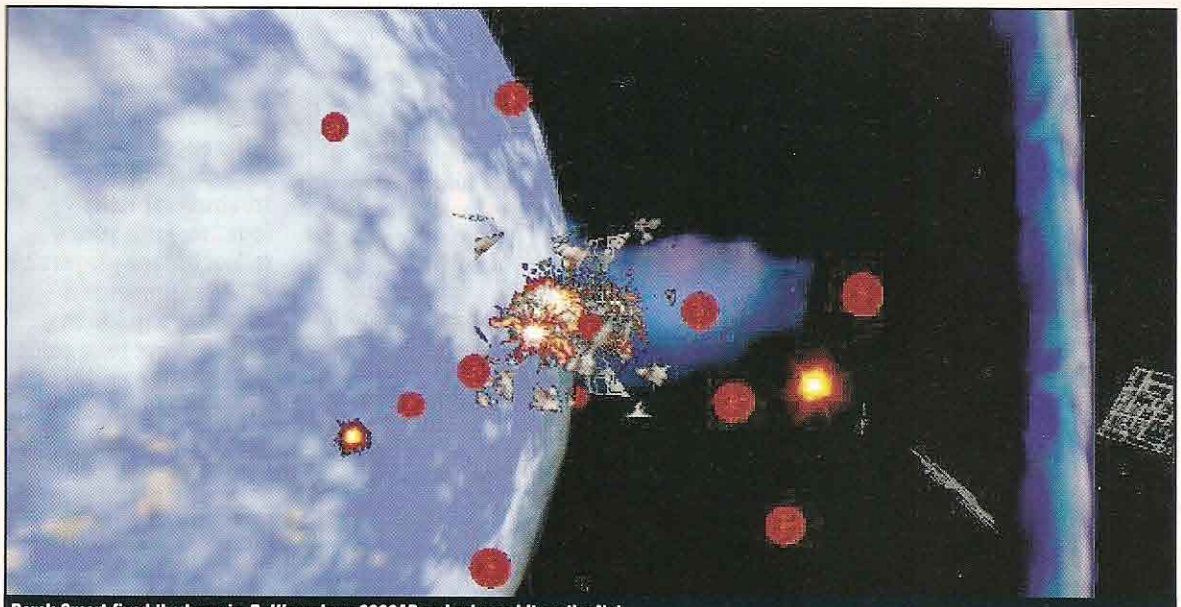


Shadow Warrior: cue player-requested 'bad English', kung-fu movie voice-over – "Eat sword, young gwasshopper!"

CASE 4 THE SHOTGUN IN *DUKE NUKEM 3D*



Online gamers decided they wanted a shotgun in the final versions of *Duke Nukem 3D*. And waddya know, they got it.



Derek Smart fixed the bugs in *Battlecruiser: 3000AD* and released it on the Net

"You punkassmotherf***er!", screams a newsgroup posting at its recipient. Lined up behind this venomous outburst are another hundred, all waiting their turn to unleash their wrath upon one Derek Smart, the lead designer/developer of Take 2's *Battlecruiser: 3000AD*. Their problem with him? Well, they didn't like the bugs in the game. And now they hate him. Judging from their acid-soaked postings, they'd rather put him through the blades of a combine harvester than forgive him for putting them through such gaming hell. And they'll use all their limited vocabulary to shred his game *and* attack his personal life: "[Derek] DOES have a girlfriend – he cut a picture out of Big Fat Ass and pasted it on his wall... He slobbers over this 'girlfriend' all day."

The trouble is that this war of words has been going on since October 1996, after initial punter complaints were allegedly ignored by Take 2. Back then, Derek bravely decided to defend himself and the game online, alleging that the game was released before it was completed and that it was the company's decision alone. Ever since then he's been constantly working in his own time to create an unbugged version of the game, and in Feburary this year he even put a free copy of it online to quash the fury of his detractors.

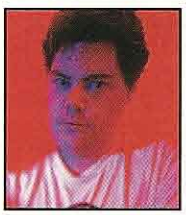
TALK TALK

While the above case isn't exactly the norm, the phenomenon of software developers talking directly to gamers one-on-one hundred online is. The developers and head honchos of any self-respecting company have been mixing it up with their fans for quite a while now, monitoring, posting and talking to us, the games players who make them all that lovely money to buy that second Ferrari and the Malibu home next to Jack Nicholson. And while criticism can come thick and fast, the Net is offering games companies the chance to put their gold-ringed finger on the pulse of the market and find out for free what punters want to see in their games, whether it be through feedback on existing titles, opinions of shareware releases of forthcoming games, or suggestions for sequels. And it's proving to be invaluable.

Take 3D Realms, creators of the classic *Duke Nukem 3D*. They've had their heads buried in the Net from the beginning, as company president George Broussard explains: "We've been big fans of online feedback for years, way before *DN 3D*. It's always played a part in our game design, and we were online back in the old BBS days before the Web, seeking out people's opinions. What's happened in the last two years with the growth of the WWW and the Internet has been great, and has put us in contact with more fans than ever before."

So how does George go about 'litmus testing' the general public's tastes? First up are the online surveys while a game is still in production. "For *Duke Nukem 3D*, we debated for some time about whether we wanted a shotgun in the game [as *Doom* had]," he explains. " After a couple of weeks of internal debate, I released a short poll on our America On-line forum asking people: 'Do you want a shotgun in *Duke 3D*, and if so how should it work?' We got hundreds of responses, with the vast majority being yes. As a result, players got a shotgun."

Other 3D Realms online polls have also decided on aesthetic details such as the voice acting in *Shadow Warrior*, where players decided it should parody the 'bad English' used in dubbed kung fu movies. 3D Realms' habit of releasing shareware previews of forthcoming titles isn't purely a publicity drive, either: "Our shareware releases are invaluable for providing feedback for the full version," George gushes. "In *Duke 3D*, I remember adding things like mouse aiming, that v1.0 did not have, because the users demanded it."



"It's very easy to get caught up in 'we can do no wrong' and design games from an ivory tower, but if you do that you'll just get destroyed when you release a game"

GEORGE BROUSSARD, 3D REALMS

Perhaps the most fertile form of feedback for designers though is the player criticisms of original titles, used to shape the sequels. Even the likes of iD Software, creators of *Doom*, *Quake* etc, have put their ear to the ground and subsequently maximised the gameplay of that holy grail of all shoot 'em ups, *Quake 2*. Todd Hollenshead, CEO of ID, comments: "As great a game as *Quake* is, there were some legitimate criticisms of the game that came from a very broad base of players. For example, players wanted a more coherent single-player game... and we focused on bettering the single-player experience for *Quake 2*." Which is something they've succeeded in doing, judging from our review: "*Quake II* is pretty much perfect" (*PCZ* #59 97%).

USER-FRIENDLY

While the likes of Hollenshead value player feedback, they still focus on producing the vast majority of ideas, storylines and so forth in-house. Others though, like the *Heavy Gear* developers at Activision, are far more keen on keeping game design very much an open house. Tim Morten, director of *Heavy Gear*, explains: "*HG* was based almost entirely on feedback from players of *MechWarrior 2*. I've personally received over 2500 e-mails regarding *MechWarrior 2*, and I read every one of

BETA-NIKS

Gamers get their fingers on the pulse

Want to get your hands dirty and make a real difference to a game? The best way is to land yourself a job beta-testing software, providing the game makers with feedback during the development of a title. Getting a testing gig isn't the easiest endeavour in the world, because everyone wants a slice of the action, but keeping an eye out for adverts on official homepages and drumming up a decent reputation on the newsgroups can help get you spotted. Alternatively, check out the likes of Gamespot, who put up the latest beta-testing positions in a handy index at www.gamespot.com/betacenter/index.html. **In the meantime, here's some advice to help give you an idea of what the developers are looking for...**

SUSAN WOOLEY
Blizzard Software

"To become one of our external beta testers, we have sign-ups on our Web page for usually 1000 positions. We then weed out people by our minimum system requirements, and from there we pretty much randomly select the testers. We might add a few after that to make sure we have a global representation"

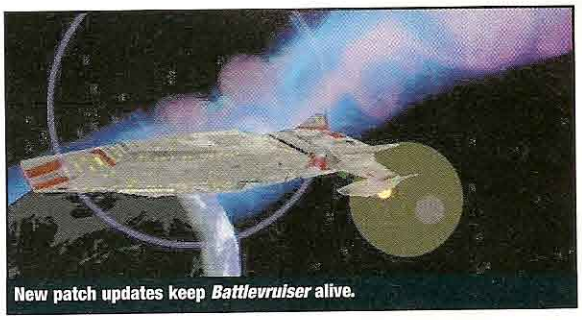
TIM MORTEN
Activision

"We solicit applicants directly on the Internet. Generaliy we'll post a message on the Usenet gaming newsgroups several months prior to the release of a game. Applicants are asked to describe their computer system and to provide some information about what games they like to play. We try to get a wide range of computer configurations and skill levels so that the feedback isn't skewed. Prior beta-testing experience can be helpful but it isn't requisite"



Tim Morten: *Heavy Gear* director and major-league fan of player feedback.

them. Literally the first thing I did when *Heavy Gear* was green-lighted was comb through my archive of e-mails to identify the most frequent requests for features. These ideas, combined with some brainstorming on the part of the design team, comprised the foundation for the game. From this point we were able to create our design document."


New patch updates keep *Battlevruiser* alive.

Indeed, if the head honchos at Activision were ever unconvinced by a particular game element, the first thing Morten did was head for the e-mail archive. "When the company was sceptical about the validity of adding certain features," says Tim, "it was user posts and e-mails that the production team used to substantiate their design."

NET GAINS

But the Net community's role doesn't stop once a game has been released. As reflected by Derek Smart's endeavours to douse the flame war surrounding *Battlecruiser: 3000AD*, bugs and other technical issues can breed bad word-of-mouth online. And keeping one eye on the Net is vital. For example, Interplay employ people to sift through the hundreds of online opinions about their released games, and ongoing epics suffering from teething problems, such as *Ultima Online*. "I write a weekly report for Interplay and include current issues, complaints, viewpoints, kudos and so on," explains Interplay's Meghan Jenks. "All these comments and posts come from Usenet, Websites and e-mail. The report is read by a good portion of the company, and I will often get an e-mail asking for more information or background on something mentioned in the report."

With all this positive talk of punter empowerment, what do the players themselves think? While companies that show a keen disinterest in Net opinion are frowned upon, those that actively encourage feedback are welcomed with open arms by gamers. Even if something is wrong with a game, a CEO dropping in to offer support and reassurance can often do wonders for brand loyalty

As far as actually making a genuine difference, there's no doubt that players are convinced that their individual voices do play an important part in game design, as illustrated by Australia-based gamer Michael Barnes: "In a number of cases I have made comments and suggestions to games companies and seen a corresponding change in subsequent releases. I do not think these changes were due to my suggestion alone, but I think my opinion was one voice in many persuading the developers to make particular changes."

Tonis, a Candian-based player and programmer, goes further: "What really caught my interest was that one of the programmers from Interplay, Timothy Cain, Lead Programmer of *Fallout*, was posting help and asking for comments and questions. At this point I bought the game and enjoyed playing it. After a while a serious bug popped up which was killing my games. I talked to him through e-mail and tried to give him enough information to help them out."

LISTEN AND LEARN

Ultimately though, perhaps it's the immediate nature of the Net that is proving to be the gamer's greatest ally (and dodgy software's greatest enemy), as games can be praised or razed by players from all over the world with a single click of a mouse button. Paul Zoski, game fanatic, explains: "The most powerful ability the Net grants the PC gamer is the power of review. If a lot of people post how terrible a game is, or how good a game is, other people on the Net will notice, and that will affect sales of that game."

With more and more people going online each year, it's becoming increasingly clear that companies simply can't afford *not* to take notice of online opinion. Which is an argument that 3D Realms boss George Broussard concurs with: "The Net keeps you well-grounded with what's going on out there. It's very easy to get caught up in 'we can do no wrong' and design games from an ivory tower, but if you do that you'll just get destroyed when you release a game." PCZ

BE HEARD

Want to make a difference? Unleash your pent-up frustration? Rally together with your fellow games players? *PC Zone* presents a beginner's guide to where to get your voice heard online and hear those of others

NEWSGROUPS

comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.action
comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.adventure
comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.rpg
comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.strategic
comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.flight-sim
The five main forums for PC gamers. Reviews, cheats and tips, bug reports, technical queries, buying advice and more create the ideal network for punter empowerment.

WEBSITES

PC GAME REVIEW www.pcgr.com/
A huge site featuring reviews of every game under the sun, all of which have been written by fellow players. Check out the archives for a particular game to find out what dozens of others think before parting with your cash.

GAME POWER www.gamepower.com
Another impressive mass of gaming info, with full reviews provided by the in-house team coupled with bite-sized opinions from Joe Public. Especially handy is the regularly updated patches index.

PC GAME FINDER www.pcgame.com/
Locate sites featuring details on that obscure gaming gem you've been having problems with.

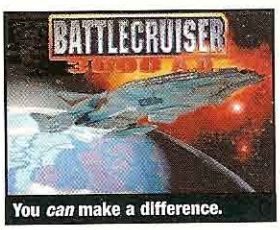
DEVELOPERS' SITES If you want to have a direct whinge at the developers, drop in on their homepages and head for customer support.

IRC & CHAT

You'll also find gamers nattering away in real time using Internet Relay Chat or Java-based chat rooms. To find specific chats, check out the official sites or use the likes of **Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com)** to carry out a specific search. For free IRC software with full installation instructions, go to **www.dragondata.com/toast/index.html**.

PATCHES

The best place to start looking for the latest patches are the official homepages of the developers. If you can't find answers there, go to the newsgroups – there's always someone on hand to offer helpful advice.



You *can* make a difference.

Q&A

DEREK SMART



If If there's one designer who's had more than his fair share of player feedback, it's Derek Smart, lead designer/developer of Take 2's Battlecruiser: 3000AD. *Despite having his professional and personal life attacked by certain rabid factions of the online community, Smart has continued to involve himself in the newsgroup debate about his game for the last year and a half.* PC Zone *talked to him about being Player Enemy Number One.*

PCZ What exactly triggered off the war of words currently residing in the newsgroups about *Battlecruiser 3000AD*?
DEREK Take 2 released the game incomplete in 1996 after years of hype. They were silent and never responded to the noise that act caused. Being my game and a labour of love, I had to defend it as well as alleviate some of the problems that the gamers were having. Naturally this put me in the spotlight and in the firing line… I had no choice – a game that I worked seven years on, buried millions of dollars into, was released incomplete and deemed to be buggy. Well, heck, any game that is released incomplete would be buggy. I had to speak up and make sure everyone knew what had happened, and at the same time pledge to complete it so that those who stuck with it would be rewarded. So far it has paid off, and I'm happy I made this decision and braved the situation.

PCZ Have you been surprised by the number of angry postings, or is this something to be expected online?
DEREK Nothing about the newsgroup surprises me any more. However, the whole thing has taken a different turn since I released the game for free. The detractors are desperately seeking attention, and the game is finally being judged based on its merits.

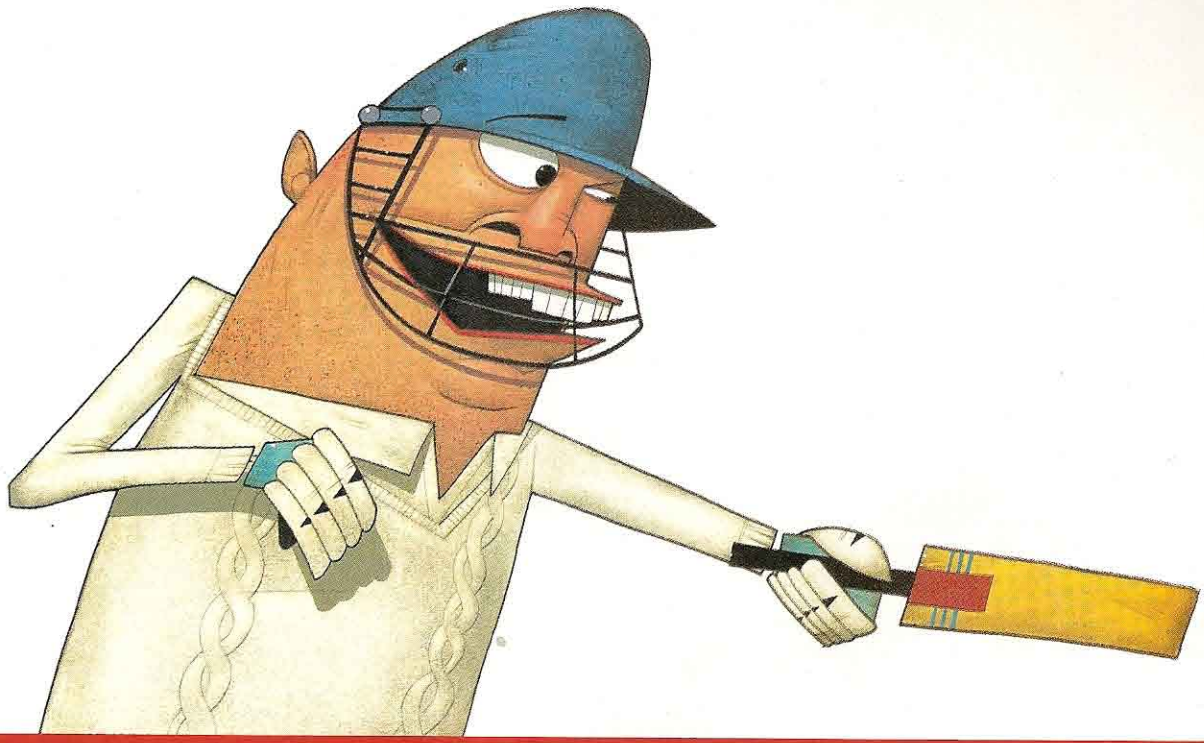
PCZ Do you take offense to any of the comments made, or is it just water off a duck's back?
DEREK In the beginning everything negative would offend me, and the offensive detractors weren't laying down their arms either. Nowadays the whole affair borders on the ridiculous, so nothing bothers me any more. This is augmented by the fact that the game is not a dud, as some would like to think.

PCZ Just how useful is the Net for gleaning player feedback for potential sequels?
DEREK The Net is very useful for immediate feedback. What you do with this feedback is up to you [the developer/publisher]. I have been doing this for many years, and long before anyone even knew what AOL was.

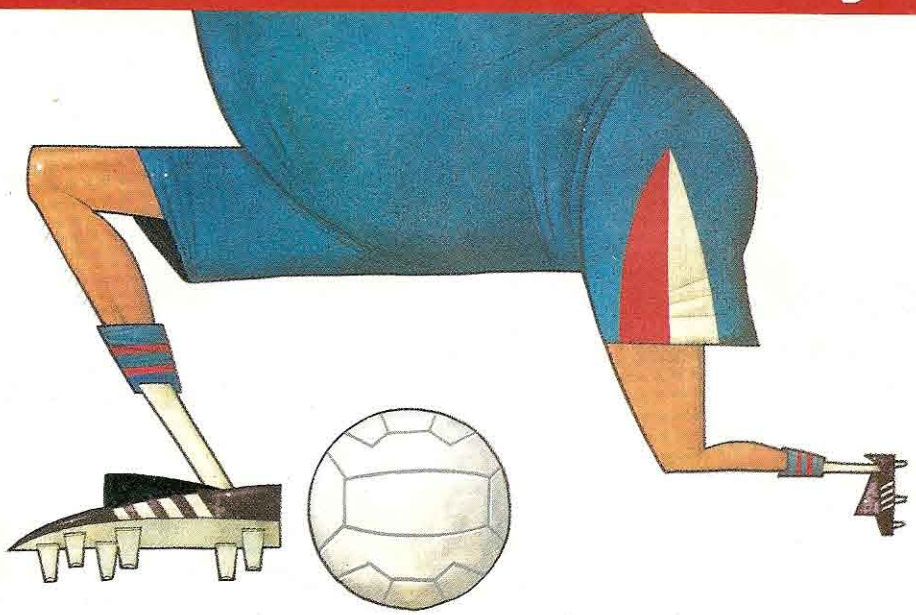
PCZ Do you feel, despite the negative comments, that it's important for games companies to make themselves available to gamers online, whatever the gamers' reactions may be?
DEREK Most definitely. You can't hide from public opinion nor user feedback. How you react to the negativity that most situations spawn depends on the person staring down the barrel. Gamers will always be gamers. Heck, in my experience I've been flamed by folks who didn't have the game. What they're doing in the gaming forum eludes me.

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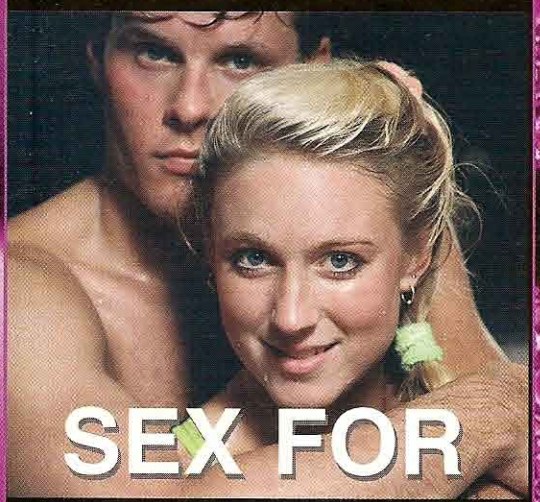
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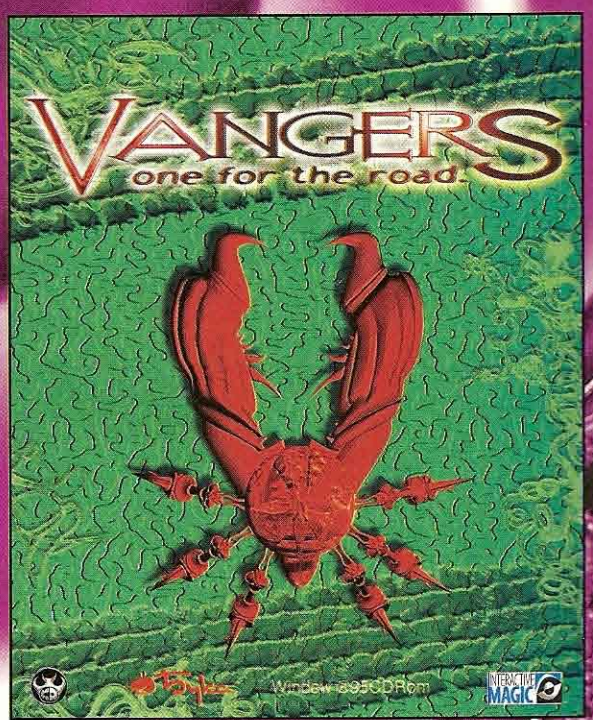
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PC ZONE REVIEWS

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the *Zone* reviews first...

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call

Activision 01895 456 7000
BMG Interactive 0171 973 0011
Blue Byte 01604 232200
Core Design 01332 297797
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Crystal Dynamics/Ubi Soft 0181 944 9000
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Empire Interactive 0181 343 7337
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Interactive Magic 01344 409399
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NovaLogic 0171 405 1777
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Sierra 0118 920 9100
Sold Out 0171 721 8767
Take 2 Interactive 01753 854444
Telstar 01932 22232
Virgin 0171 368 2255
ZABLAC 01626 332233

THE HALL OF SHAME

These are the games that we still haven't been sent for review. This means they're either completely crap and the publishers are scared we'll pan them, or their PR machine isn't quite up to full speed. This month's hall of shame comprises...

LULA & THE SEXY EMPIRE Take 2 Interactive
POWERBOAT RACING Interplay
PREMIER MANAGER 98 Gremlin
STREETS OF SIMCITY Maxis/EA
UBIK Cryo

REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST

We at *Zone* pride ourselves on telling you exactly what we think. Our writers are the most experienced and talented reviewers in the business. They're all experts in their chosen genre and they won't pull any punches – if a game's not worth buying, we'll tell you why. But we don't leave it there. We also want to know what you think of the games that come out, which is why we've got our Feedback section on page 132. This is where you get the opportunity to get your point of view into *PC Zone*. If you've got a comment to make, then we want to hear it.



DON'T BELIEVE THE JARGON

The standard spec machine these days is a P166 with 32Mb of memory – but before buying any game you need to make sure it will work on your system. Because the technical specs on packaging can sometimes be a little optimistic to say the least, make sure you check out the 'We say' bit in our tech specs box at the start of reviews. This is where we report on what we think the minimum tech specs should be. If a game runs like a tortoise on the machine listed by the publishers, then we'll tell you. All the games reviewed are tested on the minimum-spec PC as quoted on the packaging.

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

PC ZONE CLASSIC **90-100%** **Here at *Zone* we score every game out of 100. If a game receives a score of 90 or above, it is awarded the *PC Zone* Classic award. These games are original, innovative, compelling and are worth buying even if you're not a fan of the genre.**

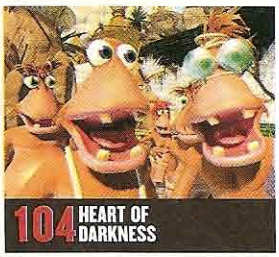
PC ZONE RECOMMENDED **80-89%** **If a game scores 80-89% it's awarded a *PC Zone* Recommended award. Games that fall into this category are excellent examples of their type, and if you're a fan of the genre they're well worth buying.**

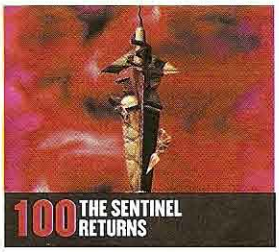
70-79% **Games that score in this region don't win any awards, but they're above average and well worth a look. If you're not a fan of the genre though, they will probably offer limited long-term appeal.**

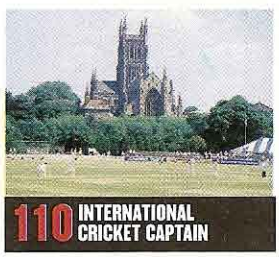
40-69% **These games are below average and you should really only consider parting with your cash if you're a big fan of the series or genre or you see it at a reduced price.**

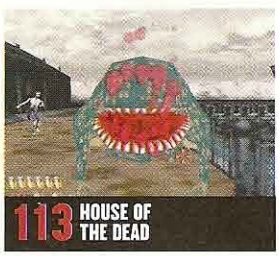
PC ZONE PANTS **0-39%** **Games that score under 40% should be avoided. They offer little in the way of long-term appeal, can be frustrating, and definitely aren't much fun. If a game is seriously bugged then it will also fall into this category. You have been warned.**

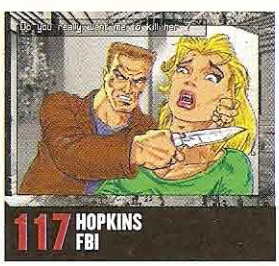












REVIEWS A-Z

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Welcome to Midgar, city of the future, and the starting point of *Final Fantasy VII*. Those "steaming chimney" things are massive reactors – which you and your mates want to blow up.

HE'S NO LADY

The story so far: Cloud and Aeris are trying to sneak inside a gangster's hideout to rescue their friend Tifa. The problem is that the henchman on the door will only let ladies through. A disguise is called for. Time for a visit to the local haberdashery...



1 After securing some perfume and a blonde wig (won during a squat-thrust competition – no shit), Cloud is urged to try on the dress and go all Pamela Anderson.



2 "Walk nicely, like a lady," urges Cloud's companion Aeris. Meanwhile, the gaming audience can scarcely believe its eyes.



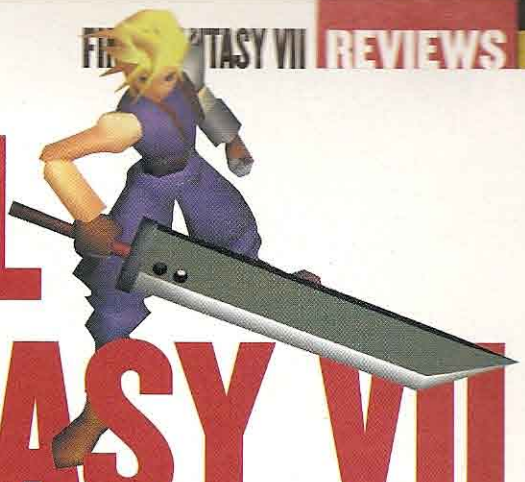
3 Our heroes return to the gangster's headquarters and – Bingo! – the disguise works. The doorman's totally fooled. And you thought bouncers were clever.



4 A quick search of the hideout's cellar and it seems like it's mission accomplished. They've found their missing friend, Tifa.



FINAL FANTASY VII



£49.99 • Eidos Interactive • Out now

Don't worry if you've never heard of the other six. *FF VII* is the first major Japanese RPG to make it to the PC... and it's superb. Reading the subtitles: *Charlie Brooker*

PC ZONE CLASSIC

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 16Mb (32Mb with 3D card)
SUPPORTS All major sound and 3D cards **WE SAY** We ran the game on a P133 with 16Mb and a 3D card, and apart from the occasional slowdown, it was fine. When installing, go for the maximum option if you have the space – it makes a huge difference to the speed of the game

Cross-dressing. *Final Fantasy VII* features a healthy dose of cross-dressing. We can't think of many other games where the hero undergoes a lengthy transvestite interlude. But then *Final Fantasy VII* isn't like other games. It's weird, it's Japanese, and it's got cross-dressing in it. And it's great.

We'll discuss that bizarre sartorial encounter later. First, we'll try to explain a bit about just what the dang heck you're looking at here.

HANDS-OFF APPROACH

We assume you're familiar with the concept of role-playing games. You know: four blokes with skin complaints sitting around a table in suburbia rolling 18-sided dice until 4am, imagining they're hairy warriors from the Wilderness of Death instead of overweight systems analysts from Filey.

Theirs is a world governed by weighty tomes containing list upon list of arcane rules about armour classes and hit points, a tragic melange of facial hair, bad teeth, perpetual virginity and desperate Tolkeinesque wish-fulfilment. It isn't the sort of thing that gets covered in enthusiastic detail by *The Face*.

But the style press would cover this particular game. Right off the bat, *Final Fantasy VII* achieves the formidable task of making role-playing cool. This isn't just an illusion of cunning design – it really is a superb game. You just have to be prepared to accept a few... peculiarities.

JUST A MINUTE

Before we go on, a quick word about cut-scenes. We've often railed against cut-scenes here at *Zone*. Nothing upsets us more than a game filled with lengthy and superfluous video sequences. We're supposed to be playing a game, we reason. If we



You want statistics? We'll give you statistics.



You know, Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas any more.



Danny Baker breaks his silence over booze hell.

> ***Final Fantasy VII* will amaze, amuse, excite, enthrall and amuse you. It's excellent value for money too: it's so big you'll need a good lie down at the end**



5 Hold on, what's this? Every night the head gangster gets three girls and... What? Suddenly our three chums are summoned to Don Corneo's office. Uh-oh.



6 The Don tries to decide which lucky lady wins a big helping of hot salami. With two scotch eggs dangling below it. Followed by a faceful of mayonnaise.



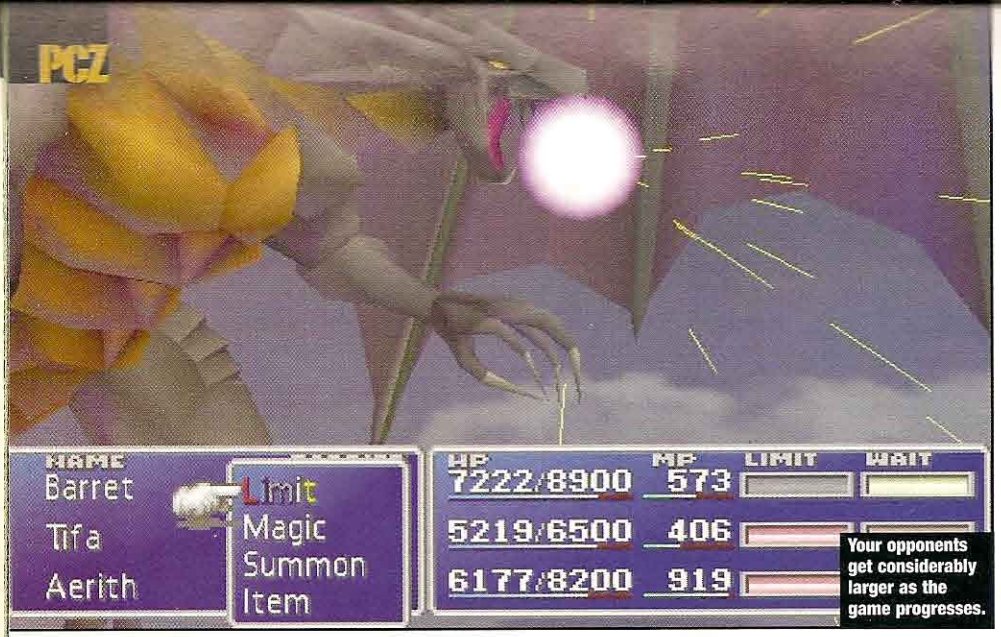
7 Luckily for Cloud, his disguise wasn't quite good enough. The Don's picked Tifa. His best friend is about to be molested, but hey – at least he's safe, right?



8 Wrong. The Don's told his henchmen that Cloud is "all theirs". He's led into a smoky back room, full of burly, sexually-frustrated criminals.



9 Slavering like zombies, the hairy-handed gangsters shamble towards Cloud with grins on their faces and ominous bulges in their trousers.

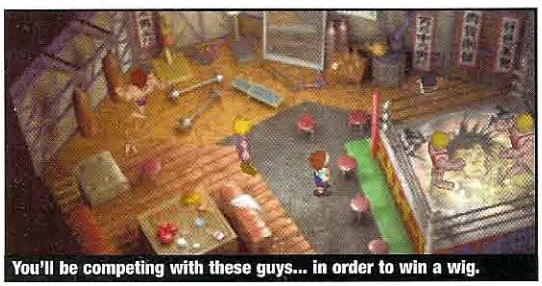


Your opponents get considerably larger as the game progresses.


Here's one of the many arcade interludes: a bike race. Rah.

THE MIND OF A MADMAN?

Is *Final Fantasy VII* the campest game ever? Yes

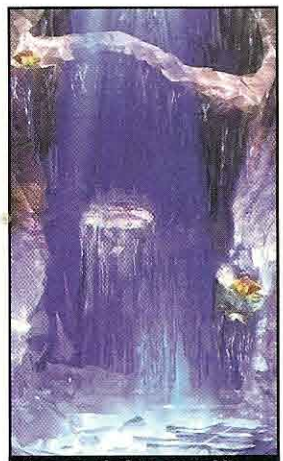

You'll be competing with these guys... in order to win a wig.

There are countless surprises in *Final Fantasy VII* – from bonus arcade games to totally unexpected plot developments (such as the bit where the hero travels backwards through time) – a very Japanese trait. There's also loads of downright baffling material here. You'll be in the middle of a fairly straightforward sub-quest when suddenly... BAM! The game totally flips out for a moment and everything goes crazy-ape bonkers.

How weird does it get? Well, there's a sequence fairly early on where Cloud, the main protagonist, needs to get hold of a blonde female wig in order to disguise himself as a girl. Curiously, the only wig in town belongs to a huge kickboxer from the local gymnasium. He doesn't want to hand it over; instead he suggests you compete with him in a squat-thrust contest. The winner gets the wig. Cue a brief *Track And Field*-style arcade sequence where you hammer away at the buttons in order to out-squat your opponent.

When you eventually triumph, the kickboxer throws a tantrum, crying on the floor while his butch mates stand around berating him for being such a wuss, and you slip out the back door with the wig under your arm. You spend the next half hour dressed as a woman.

Anyway, that's one of the least weird 'weird bits'. Fasten your seatbelts.


There are platform game bits too. It's got it all. We love it.

ALSO CONSIDER

LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE 2 (Software Company, £34.99) Another arcade-style adventure with incredibly strange interludes, *LBA 2* can keep almost anyone entertained. Except for blind people. Or people with no fingers. Or heads. ***PCZ* #33, 93%**

FALLOUT (Interplay, £34.99) Not particularly arcadey, but this is another RPG which manages to shake off that unpleasant 'real ale' image. It's a bit like *Mad Max*, and it's got loads of horrific violence and swearing in it. A fine game, make no mistake. ***PCZ* #61, 91%**

wanted to simply sit back and witness events unfolding, we'd bloody well go and watch television. Unless *Emmerdale*'s on, that is. We simply can't abide farmers. Even fictional ones. They're all shits. Anyway, you get the point: we prefer hands-on action any day.

Well, *Final Fantasy VII* is absolutely stuffed with non-interactive storyline sequences. In fact, at a rough estimate, we'd say that 25 per cent of the time you are doing little more than pushing a single button to advance to the next chunk of an ongoing rolling sequence. By rights, we should be slagging the game into the dirt, awarding it a sub-20 per cent score and phoning up the developers and calling them arseholes. But we're making an exception to the rule. Still, consider yourselves warned: there's a lot of waiting around involved in this game.

EAST-WEST DIVIDE

There's a world of difference between us and our Far-Eastern cousins. We like our RPGs traditional. Plenty of dimly-lit dungeons, axe-wielding goblins and heroes with frightening biceps shimmying about in skintight hose. We like nothing better than leaping straight into a tedious quest to recover a sacred dagger or a rusty bit of pipe. The storyline barely seems to matter – we just like the idea of the whole thing. We're idiots, basically.


Hit them! Hit them with hammers! Make them die!

The Japanese, at first glance, are altogether more well-adjusted. Their RPGs – and *Final Fantasy VII* is the finest example of the genre – are adept at keeping things exciting, by remembering to include two very important things: a compelling storyline and sackloads of eye-dazzling Animé action.

First things first. The storyline. We won't bore you rigid by recounting a load of background information: you can find out what the game's about when you buy it. What we'd like to draw your attention to is the fact that the developers haven't once lost sight of the fact that first and foremost they're supposed to be storytellers, here to keep you entertained. The audience must be held in a state of suspended disbelief for the entire duration of the narrative. They do this by performing a complex juggling act: exciting you with frequent


10 In a scene straight out of *Deliverance*, one tries uttering a few sweet nothings in Cloud's ear. X-certificate action now seems inevitable.


11 But no, the truth's out. And they're not happy. Time for a fight. And in true Jerry Springer style, now they've found out they fancied a man, he's dead meat.


12 The game immediately switches into 'battle mode', which is a diverting mixture of real-time strategy and turn-based combat.


13 Sod swords. Cloud's going to fight dirty – with magic. Minding not to break any nails, and checking his wig's straight, here he is preparing a spell...


14 ...and this is the result, in full 3D spangle-o-vision. Lovely. And this is the weediest example of magic in the game. Just see what he does next.



Sometimes, a little tactical decision-making is called for.


A shop. You can buy things here. With money. It's a shop.


A paparrazzi upskirt shot of *Sesame Street*'s Big Bird.

CONTROL FREAK

Thankfully, the Japanese are unafraid to make a game look like a game. Glance at a screenshot of a western RPG and you'll see the same old tired devices. An Olde Worlde Gothic typeface; menu screens apparently written on ancient parchments; a cursor in the shape of a sword. They're all a bit too real ale, if you know what we mean.

The Japanese don't have much truck with that shit. Instead, we're treated like adults and provided with a fresh, clean, quick, intuitive interface. The fact that *FFVII* is a visually-upgraded port of a PlayStation game helps tremendously: the game is designed to be controlled with a joypad, and it's immediately playable as a result. It sounds like a minor point, but it isn't. It makes a huge difference. Rival developers take note.


See. Told you he looks like Mister T.

bursts of activity, while allowing the overall course of events to unfold slowly, arousing your curiosity with unexpected twists in the tale en route.

Character interaction and growth is also of paramount importance. We're supposed to identify with the main protagonists, and if at the end of the tale their experiences haven't changed them in some way, we'll shuffle away disappointed and drink ourselves to death. Finally, there's the creation of a believable environment, with its own set of rules and logic – a world which slowly becomes as familiar as the player's own.

That's the basic formula for producing something that will drive the player on. It's also a basic formula which *Final Fantasy VII* slavishly adheres to. You won't be able to put it down. Really. We'll print that again so the words imbed themselves in your head. You won't be able to put it down.

And here's the bad news: it's immense in scale. It's one of those games where you keep thinking "I must be about halfway through by now" for weeks on end, but you're not halfway through at all. You've probably only seen 5% of the thing. Pray for bad weather this summer, or you could end up being the palest person in your street.

TWO STYLES BECOME ONE

The game itself is an intensely playable hybrid of simple arcade-style action and traditional RPG geekery. In its own way, *Final Fantasy VII* is just as nerdy as the most bearded *Dungeons & Dragons* clone you could imagine: like them, it's crammed to the butt cheeks with all manner of character statistics.but somehow the arcade elements make all of that seem okay.

Nowhere is this peculiar mixture of arcade fun and dice-rolling spoddery more apparent than in the battle sequences, which crop up with increasing regularity as you progress in the game. Fighting takes the form of a half-real-time, half-turn-based orgy of violence, with some truly spectacular special effects bunged in for good measure. It takes a bit of getting used to, but it works.

The action concerns the exploits of a bloke named Cloud and his chums from illegal eco-terrorist group AVALANCHE (that's probably an acronym for something, but God knows what), and as the game progresses you'll find yourself getting distinctly attached to them. Our favourite character is Barret, leader of AVALANCHE, because he reminds us of Mister T.

Initially, the game is totally linear – it almost drags you from one location to another at times. Adventure game old-timers might find this infuriating, but later on the structure becomes far more free-form, enabling you to wander around at will. The engine also undergoes a startling transformation from static pre-rendered backdrops to moving, real-time, 3D, *Mario 64*-style landscapes. This is one of the joys of the game – you never know what's coming next.

"An addictive, epic game, and just in time for the summer"

WORDS DON'T COME EASY

Hugely cheesy dialogue, mind. It's written, not spoken, and it's all been translated from Japanese. Sometimes it's laughably bad. If you encountered a script this hackneyed and unnatural in the cinema you'd stand up and hurl shoes at the screen. Furthermore, the convoluted narrative employs even more cloying sentiment and gurgling cutesyness than your average Mother's Day card. But you get into it. In fact, after an hour's play you won't even notice. If that isn't concrete evidence of the peculiar hold this game can exert, we don't know what is.

What else? Well, the graphics are first-rate. The pre-rendered backdrops which appear for the bulk of the game's early stages look like they've been lifted straight from *Akira*, while the polygonal characters that make up the cast are all designed in that intrinsically satisfying, boldly simplistic Manga style. The animation throughout is superb, especially during some of the battle sequences, with their eye-popping lighting effects and explosions.

The audio content might raise a few eyebrows. Much of the music is controlled by the MIDI chip in your sound card, so if you've got a cheap one, it could prove unbearable. And most of the sound effects themselves sound like old-school Megadrive noises. Sonic purists will probably want to pull their own heads off with rage at this news, but we rather liked them.

And that's all we've got time for. Did you notice we haven't really told you anything about the plot itself? That's because we want you to play the damn thing and find out for yourself. *Final Fantasy VII* will amaze, amuse, excite, enthral and reward you. It's excellent value for money, too: it's so big you'll need a good lie down at the end.

If you've never played a Japanese RPG before, you may want to do that old 'try before you buy' thing. But that would just be boring. Instead, splash out. Live a little. Trust us on this one. You won't regret it. PCZ


Yet again, it's clobberin' time. Isn't violence wonderful?

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Fearsomely addictive • Genuinely epic in scale • Plenty of hidden surprises • Refreshing change from traditional PC adventure games

DOWNERS Interminable cut-scenes • Risible dialogue

93 An addictive, epic game. Just in time for the summer


15 "Want some more?" queried Cloud. "Do ya? Huh? Want some? Do you f**king want some? Well? Do ya? Eh? Come on then. Come on."


16 "We do indeed 'want some more', sir," replied gangster number two. "Have some of this." And with that he let off a salvo of gunfire.


17 That's made Cloud angry – so extremely angry, in fact, that he can now perform his "special super-dooper fabby attack" and make them pay.


18 Spong. Sping. Fling. Zwing. Cling. Clang. Pong. Tang. Dang. Bang. Grunt. Fart. Burp. Vomit. Etc. Before long, everybody's dead.


19 Battle over, and the obligatory experience points are dished out. Now to go and find Tifa. Once we've seen to these nails – they're in a state.

COMMANDOS: BEH

£44.99 • Eidos Interactive • Out now

It was a time of war. The Second World War, to be precise. *Steve Hill* kicks the back doors in

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P100 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** We'd recommend a P133 with 32Mb RAM

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

ON THE CD

Here in England, we have very little truck with the Germans, or the *Jeer*mans, as scouse unfunny man Stan Boardman would have it. As well as the apocryphal bombing of the aforementioned buck-toothed Merseyside comic's chippy (and a number of vastly more significant locations), they habitually humiliate us at football –1966 withstanding, and that was largely due to an extremely dubious goal. However, with the advent of *Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines*, bitter, resentful xenophobes are offered a unique opportunity for revenge, provided they can forget that it's only a game, or indeed a 'sick virtual reality computer game', as the less informed tabloids would probably have it. And there is plenty for the moral majority to be 'up in arms' about, with death meted out in the form of shooting, stabbing, exploding, trapping and even poisoning, to name but a few macabre methods.

In war there are always casualties, and a sobering reminder of this is provided by genuine black-and-white footage of young men marching off to die in a foreign field. The occasional newsreel clips sit somewhat uneasily with the game though, which while not quite as flippant as *Cannon Fodder* (*PCZ* #14, 90%), is nevertheless vaguely cartoony, featuring larger-than-life characters and exaggerated shrieks of pain.

The historical authenticity also raises a further issue for the ethical guardians of Fleet Street, which could well cause some confusion. Whereas running someone over in *Carmageddon* or *Grand Theft Auto* is clearly sick and wrong, crushing a couple of Germans beneath the wheels of a military vehicle in the name of King and country must surely be deemed an honourable activity.

TIME TO KILL

Whatever, the moral issues aren't our primary concern here. You're all big enough and ugly enough to make up your own minds; more important is whether the game is worth spunking £44.99 on. And yes it is, although with some reservations. Firstly, a degree of patience is needed (or even a degree of *im*patience). Secondly, a lot of spare time is essential, making it an ideal game for insomniacs, the unemployable, and angry loners.

Make no mistake, *Commandos* is a commitment, and if you're seeking more instant visceral thrills you'd be well advised to look elsewhere. Even hard-core fans of real-time strategy may baulk at the intricacies of some of the later missions, which require inch-perfect movements and immaculate timing. This game is bloody difficult. Not as in a bit tricky, but as in genuinely brain-achingly hard, at times seeming more like work than play. Frustration is inevitable, and you can mess up not particularly because of a slack strategy, but through becoming a cack-handed buffoon at a crucial moment, with even the easier missions requiring countless uses of the Quicksave facility.

"*Commandos* is essentially toy soldiers taken to the nth degree; although to kids playing with plastic figurines 20 years ago, it is the stuff of a madman's dream"

TIN SOLDIER

For slower readers, *Commandos* is essentially toy soldiers taken to the nth degree; although to kids playing with plastic figurines in the sand 20 years ago, it is the stuff of a madman's dream. Controlling a small troop of highly trained experts, the missions span most of the war and take in Norway, North Africa, the Rhine crossing and even the D-Day invasion. The action takes place over land and sea, and even occasionally in the air, with all the buildings and vehicles based on genuine wartime structures. With a generic interface, the idea is to achieve the various objectives without losing a single



Missions are interspersed with actual wartime footage. With Germans and everything.

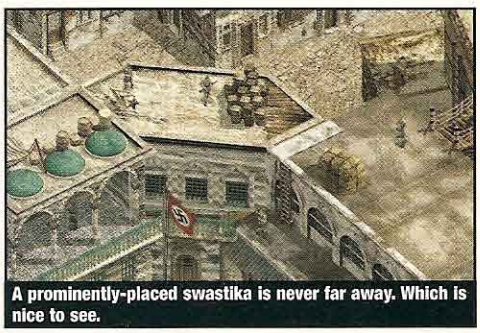
A train, evidently. It's down to you to ensure its progress.



It's D-Day, on your PC, in your house, any time you want it.



Mission objectives are read out and also appear in text form. Cigar optional.



A prominently-placed swastika is never far away. Which is nice to see.



The screen can be zoomed out to provide an overview of the task ahead.

IND ENEMY LINES

commando, which can be a bit of a pisser if one of your guys is shot in the face within the first few seconds. Also, a mission can become untenable if, for instance, a getaway vehicle is destroyed or you run out of explosives. There are numerous ways of solving missions, although there is usually one particularly elegant method that only the most advanced military strategist will work out. Inevitably there is a lot of gnashing of teeth involved, although when a plan comes together it can be a beautiful thing.

The graphics never fail to impress, and it is possible to zoom in and out. Being able to rotate the scenery would be nice, as the action is sometimes obscured. Ultimately though, it's an excellent game and more than capable of stealing large chunks of your life. For filling that awkward gap between *Jerry Springer* and *Countdown*, there are few better activities; except, of course, those involving a buttered hoover. PCZ

ALSO CONSIDER

CANNON FODDER (Sold Out, £4.99) Paupers can kick it old skool with Sensible's classic soldier 'em up, which is essentially a simplistic *Commandos* but played for laughs. War has never been this much fun, or this cheap. SEE PAGE 128

SOLDIERS AT WAR (Mindscape, £34.99) More World War II shenanigans from strategy meisters SSI **NOT REVIEWED**

ARMY MEN (Ubi Soft, £39.99) Not very good war thing from French sorts. Shock. *PCZ* #66, 41%

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Authentic • Involving • Addictive

DOWNERS Too difficult • Frustrating • Fiddly

87 Hard-core wartime shenanigans for the seriously committed



Within these walls lies a general who must be assassinated. At the slightest hint of bother he makes good his escape by car and the mission is a failure.



Commandos features some emphatic attention to detail. In this mission the shooting range will mask the sound of your gunfire.

THE DIRTY HALF DOZEN

There are six main commandos in the game, each suited to various aspects of combat



GREEN BERET

NAME: Jack 'Butcher' O'Hara
BIRTHPLACE: Dublin, Ireland
He shows great initiative and independence, and is able to climb walls and lift heavy objects. Particularly adept with a blade in close combat.



SNIPER

NAME: Sir Francis T Woolridge, aka Duke
BIRTHPLACE: Sheffield, England
An expert marksman, he is capable of picking off enemy soldiers at extreme distances. Very useful until he runs out of ammo.



DIVER

NAME: James Blackwood, aka Fins
BIRTHPLACE: Melbourne, Australia
His sailing skills are invaluable in any mission that involves naval operations. Can operate any boat and also has a scuba and a harpoon.



SAPPER

Name: Thomas Hancock, aka Fireman
BIRTHPLACE: Liverpool, England
An explosive expert, he is brought into play when major installations need to be destroyed. Can also lay traps for enemy soldiers.



DRIVER

NAME: Samuel Brooklyn
BIRTHPLACE: Brooklyn, USA
Has a wide knowledge of mechanics and is able to repair and drive all types of land vehicles. Also wields a handy machine-gun.



SPY

NAME: Rene Duchamp, aka Frenchy
BIRTHPLACE: Lyon, France
Formerly of the French Secret Service, he is a master of disguise. Able to pass himself off as a German and cause useful diversions.

ALL JOIN IN FOR A GAME OF WAR

Commandos is ideal for angry loners, but is also a laugh in a mates round situation

Naturally, *Commandos* comes with full multiplayer support, although due to the nature of the game it is of the co-operative ilk (no one would want to play as the Germans anyway). The small squadrons make for some tight games, and one person's reckless action can cause violent death for all involved, with blame roundly apportioned to other players when it all goes tragically wrong.

ACHTUNG!

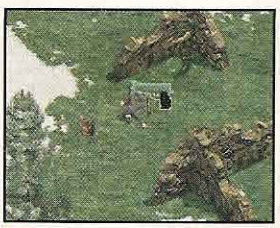
Cunning and stealth are required in *Commandos*, as this very first mission demonstrates



1 The Green Beret starts the game lurking among some trees. So far, so good.



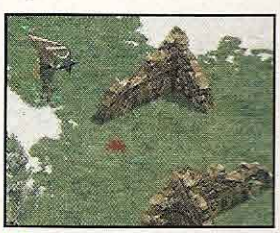
2 He then crawls behind this wall, being careful to stay out of sight of a roving German.



3 He then places a decoy and sets off its siren. The German runs over and is shot in the face.



4 The Green Beret then tosses the German's still warm corpse over his shoulder.



5 He dumps the body out of sight of other Germans and heads off seeking fresh blood.

MECHCOMMANDER

£34.99 • MicroProse • Out June

Now you can command a whole platoon of robot fighting machines. *Andrew Wright* is the man in charge

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 16Mb **SUPPORTS** Direct3D-compatible graphics card, network play, Net play **WE SAY** You need a P166 with 32Mb

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

ON THE CD

If you're the kind of gamer who bases buying decisions on the screenshots on the back of a box, you're probably also the type who likes to classify games into so-called 'genres'. "Oh yes, it's another *C&C* clone," you mutter as you put it back on the shelf, or push aside some spotty adolescents on the way to the counter with it, depending on your point of view.

However, *MechCommander* doesn't fit into any particular slot. It's one of an increasing number of third-person, top-down-perspective games that really should have a label all of its own. Yes it's real-time, yes you select and give orders to units, and yes you use the terrain – and a handy map – to carry out various missions. But *MechCommander* doesn't feel anything like *C&C*. In fact, it has much more in common with games like *Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines* (see page 96) or even *X-COM Apocalypse*, (*PCZ* #52,95%) where you're in charge of individual soldiers, each with different characteristics such as weapons, skills and so on.

Where *C&C*-type games are fast-paced and frantic, *MechCommander* is a lot more cerebral – strategy and skill are much more important than the ability to move a mouse at ridiculous speed. That doesn't mean you don't get the thrills and spills, though. *MechCommander* has plenty of nail-biting action and, at times, speed, and the ability to think on your feet is vital.



The high ground has some advantages – it doesn't block line of sight, but you do get a combat advantage.

IN THE BEGINNING

So what's it about? Well, *BattleTech* started out as a miniature tabletop war game system where both sides were made up of futuristic armed and armoured robots that bristled with all kinds of hi-tech armament. In the year 3050 – or thereabouts – men and women fight inside these 'mechs', but overall command is down to the mech commander, situated well away from the action. The idea is neatly brought to life in the opening digitised video sequence where a commander guides his units using a pointer and map screen.



Why don't mechs wipe their feet? Just look at those big mother-loving footprints.

For once the opening cinematics are actually relevant.

MechCommander has some 30 missions divided into five campaigns, all revolving around the invasion of an enemy-held planet. The bad guys are called clans and they have similar military technology available to them. However, you're mainly up against vehicles and rotating laser turrets in the early missions, with mechs creeping in gradually as the scenarios get harder. And it's just as well, because the enemy mechs are a lot better.

Your role is to arm and equip the mechs, choose which mech warriors to put inside, and upgrade or buy new mechs when you complete missions. Successful missions earn you points to spend, but this can be boosted by the capture or destruction of enemy mechs, which you can either repair and use, or sell.

One thing that differentiates *MechCommander* from the *C&C* clones is that you don't build bases or harvest anything, and the number of mechs you can take on a mission is limited to 12. However, control freaks and micro-managers shouldn't despair too much, because you do have a lot of options between missions. Each warrior has different ratings for gunnery, movement and use of sensors, and each mech has a limit on the weapons it can have, so your tactics reflect the way you've configured your mechs: do you cut down on short-range weapons and add more long-range cannons or missiles? Do you keep some mechs for long-range work and others for close assault? Or do you rely on speed and surprise to get the job done? There are all sorts to take into account – the number of rounds available for each weapon, the accuracy and damage characteristics of each, as well as your own mech's armour and speed. For example, mech armour is weaker at the rear, so a well-organised force attacking from two or three directions will gain a big advantage. Each of the mech 'drivers' has their own skills


The biggest mother on the clans' side is this monster 100-ton assault mech.



One platoon assaults another hiding behind a wall of rocks.

ALSO CONSIDER

MECHWARRIOR 2 (Activision, £19.99) *MechWarrior* is a first-person-perspective game based on the *BattleTech* universe. Version 3 is due out soon from MicroProse.
PCZ #45, 88%

TOTAL ANNIHILATION (GTI, £39.99) Games of the *C&C* genre are faster and more frantic. There are also many more units in action at once, and better multiplayer/skirmish options. *PCZ* #56, 92%

X-COM APOCALYPSE (MicroProse, £34.95) As a third-person, top-down combat game, the real-time combat mission element of *Apocalypse* is probably the closest thing to *MechCommander* in terms of look and feel. *PCZ* #52, 95%



Multiplayer mayhem and murder: three different players battle it out for control.

and combat instincts. Some are rash, others careful, and some will even ignore your orders in the heat of battle. However, the level of AI is excellent and your own units will not stand by stupidly while others are attacked. Units always react to threats, and even adopt firing ranges that reflect their weapons' capabilities. The same applies to the enemy AI.

MECHING OUT

MechCommander's graphics are nothing short of incredible. The animations are smooth and realistic, with over 100,000 different frames for each unit, so even when you zoom in (there are two magnification levels) the level of detail is staggering.

The terrain is beautifully drawn, and it's easy to tell the high ground from the low. Regrettably, only one screen resolution is supported, namely 640x480. On the plus side, the terrain can also be changed by weapon damage, explosions, and even footprints that let you tell heavy mechs from lighter ones. These armoured dreadnoughts will knock over trees and can stomp on buildings, fences and even tiny enemy humans.

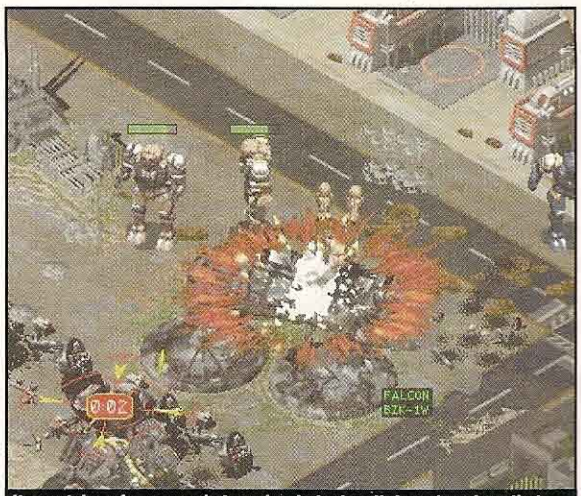
Unfortunately the terrain doesn't behave entirely the way it should – you can't go 'hull down', for example, or shield yourself from detection by hiding behind a hill. You can see further from high ground, but that's about it. There is no fog of war, and while unrevealed areas are blacked out to start with, as soon as you explore them the terrain remains visible even if you move out. You can also see enemy units moving there even if you're miles away.

Mechs can be given a range of orders including guard, jump (if fitted with jets), run and stop. Units can also be told to fire from a particular position or one of three ranges – short, medium or long. Other options include light or heavy artillery strikes, the number of which depends on the mission, or even the deployment of remote sensing devices. You can also purchase and use vehicles, capture certain buildings and vehicles and blow up bridges.

Perhaps the most innovative device is the way you can fire at different parts of an enemy mech. For example, you can tell all units to fire at the legs to avoid serious systems damage – useful if you want to salvage it – or aim at the head for a quicker and more decisive kill.

The big disappointment is that once you've played the 30 missions, that's it. There's no map or scenario editor, and there isn't even a skirmish mode for 'multiplayer' games where the computer plays the other side. In any case, only half a dozen multiplayer maps are included. That doesn't stop me loving the game – it has a high three-in-the-morning factor – but it would be nice to see these major flaws sorted out. And pretty soon please, MicroProse – I'm on mission seven already. PCZ

"The graphics are nothing short of incredible and the level of detail is staggering"



It may take a few seconds to arrive, but when it does, boy does that artillery do some damage!



An enemy Uller-type mech gets it in the rear from three mechs.

PCZ VERDICT

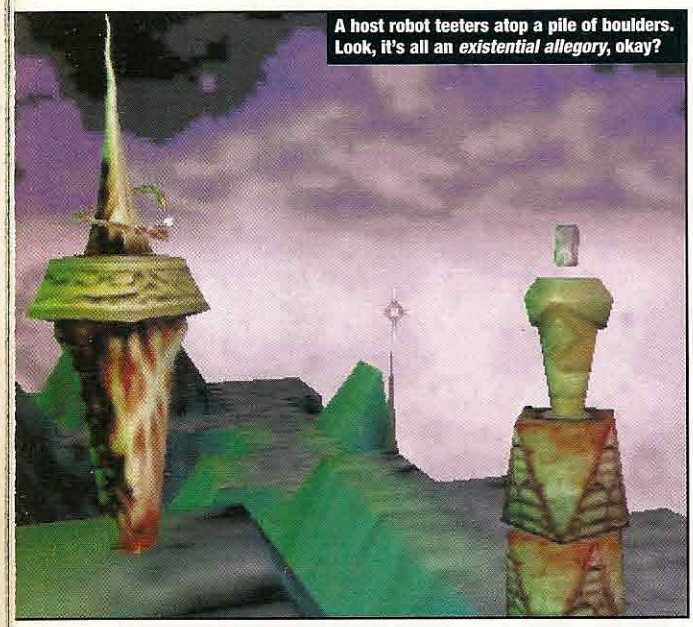
UPPERS Nice graphics and animation, super sound and absorbing plot • Dozens of weapon and Mech options for the micro-manager • Real-time gameplay still leaves you time to think ahead

DOWNERS No skirmish mode and limited number of missions • Maximum of only 12 units on the Mech side

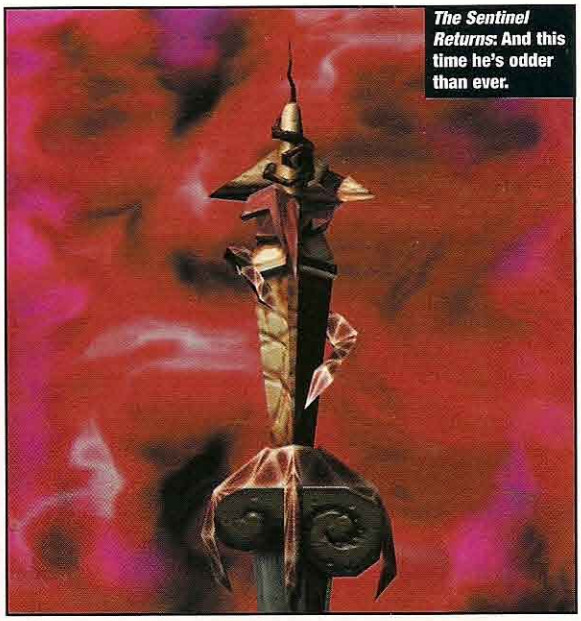
85 Highly original and very challenging, with loads of depth

THE SENTINEL RETURNS

£TBA • Psygnosis • Out end of July



A host robot teeters atop a pile of boulders. Look, it's all an *existential allegory*, okay?



The Sentinel Returns: And this time he's odder than ever.

ALSO CONSIDER

CHESSMASTER 4000 (Mindscape, £34.99) It may not be as scary as *The Sentinel Returns*, but you just can't beat a game of good old-fashioned chess. And this is the best simulation available. Pretty graphics, a rock-hard engine and online two-player option make this the king of the chessing hill. It's a bloody good tutor, too. ***PCZ* #11, 90%**

PUZZLE BOBBLE (GT Interactive, £19.99) Another game to stretch the old brain muscle. *Puzzle Bobble* couldn't be more different in terms of game mechanics and atmosphere, but it's an absolute must if you like a lightning-fast challenge to the cerebellum. ***PCZ* 50, 94%**

I spy with my little eye... something beginning with 'weird'. *Charlie Brooker* elucidates

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** For once the minimum spec is just fine. But a 3D card improves things, obviously

PCZONE CLASSIC

Ever sat around a pub table having a conversation about nightmares? It's incredibly frustrating: everyone's straining to describe their own favourite, without wanting to listen to anyone else's offering. You *know* that *your* dream – about being forced at gunpoint to lick Mazola oil off Alan Titchmarsh's inner thigh – was the most ghoulish experience of your life, but you're the only person in the room who gives a toss. That's the trouble with nightmares: while you're experiencing one it's absolutely gripping; but try explaining it to someone afterwards and within just a few seconds their eyes glaze over. The content of bad dreams simply can't be adequately described. In order to fully appreciate a nightmare's power to disturb, you have to endure it yourself.

The Sentinel Returns is just like a nightmare, and a particularly surreal one at that. So forgive us if our description zips right over the top of your head.

PEER PRESSURE

Students should love this game, since it's all about getting as high as possible then looking down on everyone else. Actually, that's a rubbish description. It's like a cross between a game of hide and seek, an abstract painting and an extremely bad trip. Want a more detailed explanation? Okay – but before we go in, take a few deep breaths. This is pretty, er, *iconoclastic*.

You, mister player sir, take control of a disembodied presence. Not a *Duke Nukem*-style maniac, or Lara Croft, or even a tank or a spaceship. No. You control a *disembodied presence*, okay? And you'd better bloody well get used to the idea.

So, there you are, right, inhabiting the body of a host robot... oh, we didn't explain about them, did we? Sigh. Perhaps we'd better start from scratch.

Okay, the action takes place in an illusory, mountainous alien landscape. Forget Yellowstone Park, this place is bleak. More desolate even than the Arndale Centre in Wandsworth, a place so intensely dispiriting that shoppers have been known to drop to their knees and bash their heads repeatedly against the concrete floor in a desperate makeshift suicide attempt. There's no lush greenery, just a smattering of gnarled, leafless trees. And watching over it all is the eponymous Sentinel, an ominous, joyless cycloptic entity which stands upon the highest point in the valley, coldly surveying everything in his line of vision. He's rooted to the spot, but rotates slowly through 360 degrees in 12 degree stages. And this is where the game comes in: if the Sentinel turns round and spots you, you're in trouble.

Okay. With us so far? Good. So, those host robots we mentioned. Like the Sentinel, you can't physically move. You *can*, however, look around (in 3D) and teleport from one host 'body' (or robot) to another. To move from one point to another, point your cursor at a point on the landscape, press a button to create an empty 'robot', then hit another key to be instantly transported into it. Of course, you can't just zip around doing this willy-nilly; creating a robot costs energy. And to get energy you have to absorb trees. But you can only absorb trees if you're *higher* than they are, by looking down and clicking on them. The only

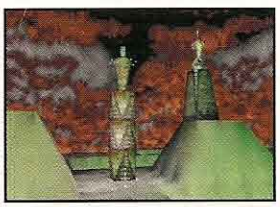
"Students should love this game, since it's all about getting as high as possible then looking down on everyone else. Actually, that's a rubbish description"

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS...

...sort of. Look, we know full well you won't understand this. It's too weird. But we're telling you anyway



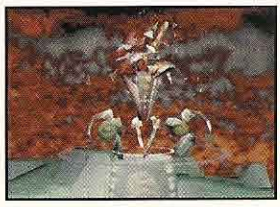
1 On the left: the Sentinel. He's looking away. Phew. On the right: a tree being absorbed.



2 With the energy gained from the tree, we've created a pile of boulders with a robot on top.



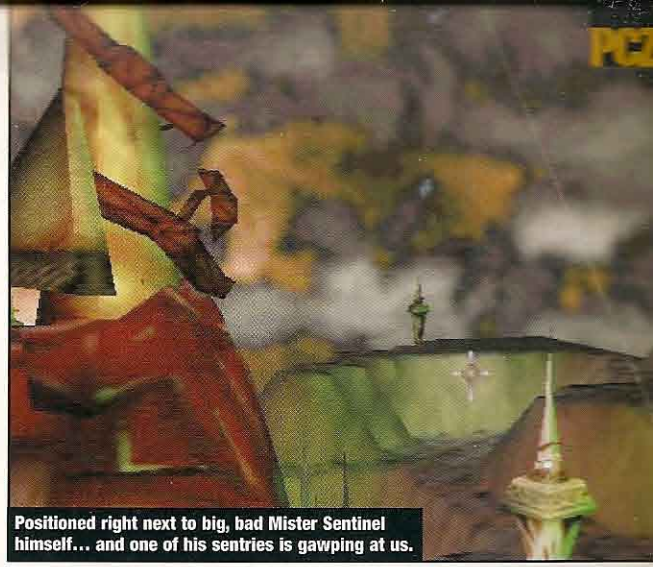
3 Now we've teleported into that robot. And look! That's where we were a minute ago.



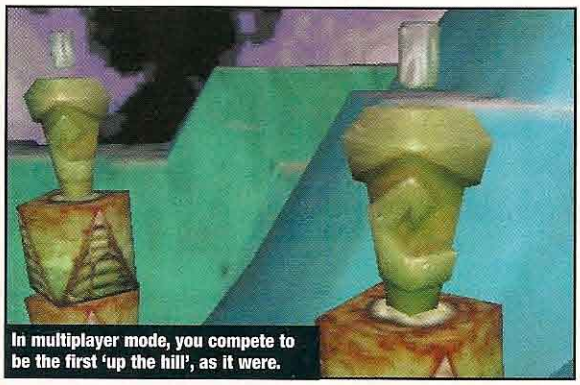
4 We're now high enough up to absorb the Sentinel himself. There. All makes sense now, eh?



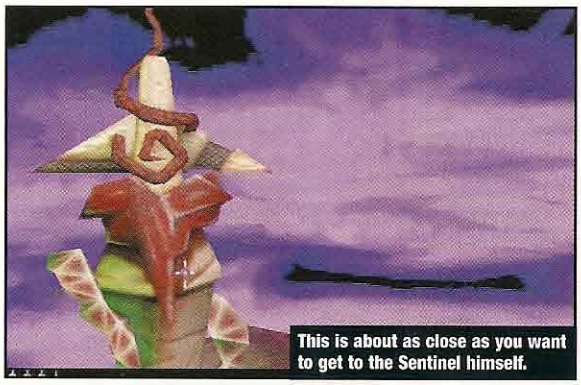
The Sentinel Returns was filmed entirely on location in Banbury.



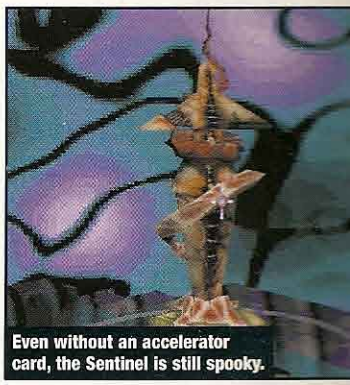
Positioned right next to big, bad Mister Sentinel himself... and one of his sentries is gawping at us.



In multiplayer mode, you compete to be the first 'up the hill', as it were.



This is about as close as you want to get to the Sentinel himself.



Even without an accelerator card, the Sentinel is still spooky.

way to get higher is to create a tower of boulders and create a robot host on top of those. Boulders cost energy too. And if the Sentinel catches you in his sight, it's your energy that gets drained – until you either move out of his way or die.

Bit hard to follow, isn't it? Not to mention boring. Sorry, we can't explain it any more clearly or arrestingly than that. Play it for just ten minutes, however, and it all starts to make sense in a peculiar kind of way. And that's when things start to get both exciting and addictive.

MA, HE'S MAKING EYES AT ME

While the game mechanics are hard to describe, the atmosphere, thankfully, isn't. It's menacing. Paranoid. Eerie. Unsettling. Like a game of Grandmother's Footsteps played against a malevolent, ethereal demon. Like we said, a nightmare – but a bizarrely compulsive one.

It's your inability to move that clinches it. Caught in the Sentinel's piercing glare (which is accompanied by an intimidating sound effect), you start panicking – looking for somewhere, *anywhere*, to place a new host body... or maybe just some trees to absorb... or just *something*. *Anything*. The sense of urgency and impotence is genuinely stirring, and quite unlike anything you'll have encountered in a game before.

The spooky, hallucinogenic visuals are superb and, if you're the owner of a 3D card, incredibly smooth to boot. It's worth noting also that the game looks and plays as competently on a P133 with 16Mb RAM and an accelerator card as it does on a P266 with 64Mb. So you low-spec owners can relax your sphincters (not too much, mind). The soundtrack (written and performed by John '*Halloween*' Carpenter – yes, *really*) is utterly excellent too.

In fact, the only thing that's bad about the game is that it's made our job so bleeding hard. Own up – you still haven't got a *clue* what it's all about, have you? Well you're just going to have to take our word for it: *The Sentinel Returns* may laugh in the face of lucid description, but it's very different, very addictive, and very, very good. If you're after a refreshing change, this is the place to start. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

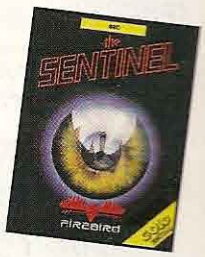
UPPERS Intense, brooding atmosphere • Fearsomely addictive • Runs nicely on a fairly low-spec machine

DOWNERS By nature, rather repetitive • Not going to be everyone's cup of char

90 **Hide and Seek + LSD = The most sinister game of the year**

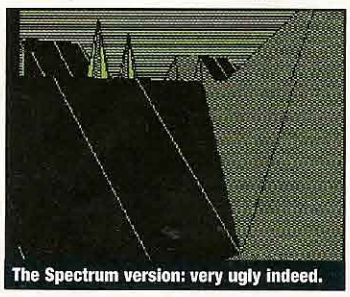
WE'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE

A brief history lesson



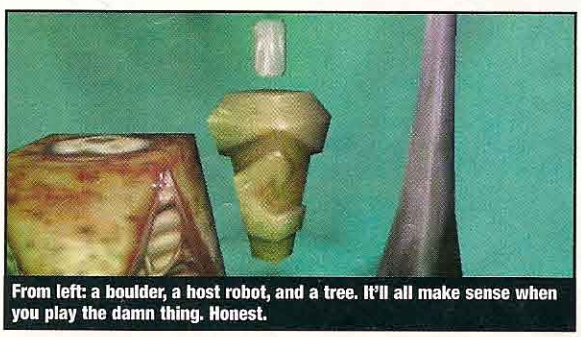
Our more world-weary, craggy faced readers will probably be nodding sagely at the mere mention of *Sentinel Returns*, because it's an update of a revered old-school classic. Originally released in 1986 on the Amstrad CPC and BBC Micro, *The Sentinel* was programmed by Geoff Crammond (of *Grand Prix* fame) and is often referred to as "the world's first VR game".

Even in those days, when *every* game was fairly surreal, *The Sentinel* stood out. Reviewers were seized by paroxysms of ecstasy, and started behaving like medieval villagers possessed by demons, writhing around on the floor and babbling in tongues about the game's all-encompassing brilliance. That hasn't happened today. This is the 90s, and we're all a bit more jaded and coolly ironic. But it's *still* a bloody good game.

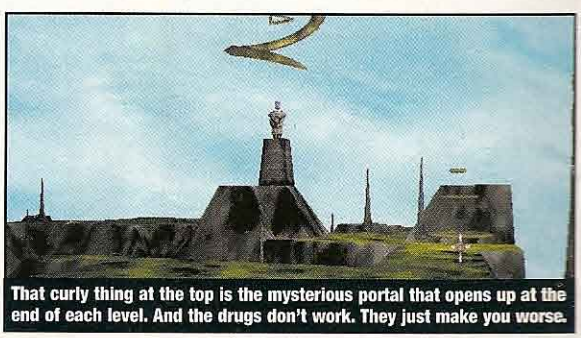


The Spectrum version: very ugly indeed.

"It looks and plays as competantly on a P133 as it does on a P266. So you low-spec owners can relax your sphincters (not too much, mind)"



From left: a boulder, a host robot, and a tree. It'll all make sense when you play the damn thing. Honest.



That curly thing at the top is the mysterious portal that opens up at the end of each level. And the drugs don't work. They just make you worse.

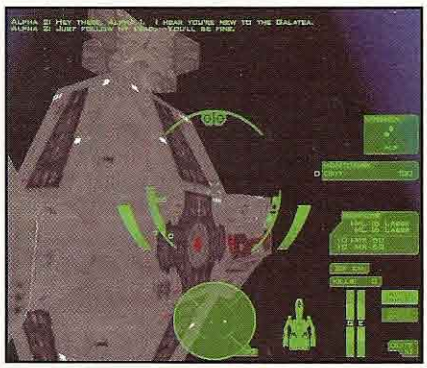
CONFLICT: FREESPACE – THE GREAT WAR

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

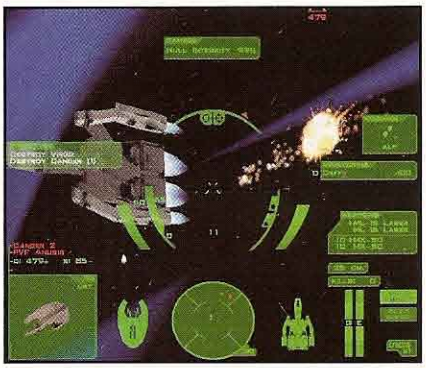
£39.99 • Interplay • Out now

EARN YOUR WINGS

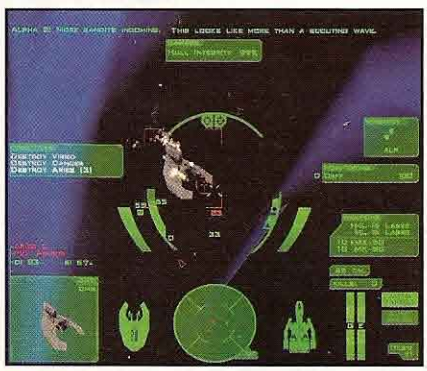
Toss the manual aside, skip through the training missions and let's kick some Vasudan butt, novice-style. Your host for this mission is Loootenant Chuck Steakfrieburger, the manliest pilot in the fleet



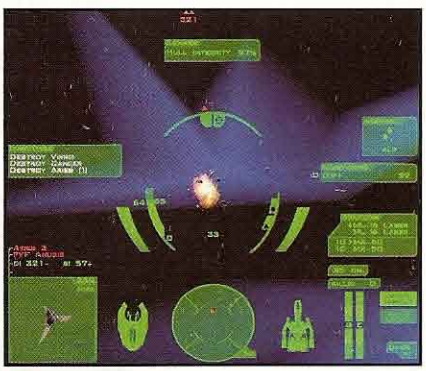
1 "Okay, kiddo, let's see what you're made of. Follow close behind – not too close, mind, I've got a wife to worry about."



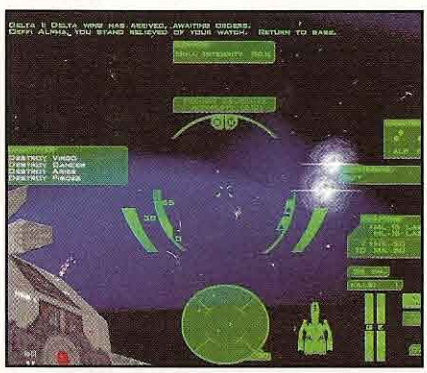
2 "Too slow, kid. You shoulda used one of those missile things. Next time stay outa the way and leave it to us real men."



3 "You've got him, kid – fire! No, the big red button, the one that says 'Fire' on it. (Doh). That's it, sparky, well done!"



4 "Nice shooting, kid. That was one in a million. I think I love you... Ahem, now all we have to do is just mop up the stragglers."



5 (Five minutes later.) "Okay, kid, the cavalry are here. Time to go home. Would you like to come over for some apple pie? Maybe stay over?"



6 "Er, no thanks, Tarquin, I'll think I'll just dissappear into one of these white holes and never come back. Cheers all the same..."

After sticking last month's free flappy bit of card to his monitor, *Richie Shoemaker* has been patiently waiting to play the game

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **Also requires** DirectSound-compatible sound card **SUPPORTS** Direct3D (though not through PowerVR), Force Feedback joysticks **WE SAY** Minimum specs are fine if you've got a 3D card, but you'll need more RAM if you run it in software mode



Conflict: Freespace has been through a few name changes in its time. Initially calling itself *Descent: Freespace*, we thought we'd be seeing an all-outdoors version of the claustrophobic 3D sci-fi shoot 'em up *Descent* (*PCZ* #25, 94%). Now, of course, it's called something entirely similar and *is* an all-outdoors version of the claustrophobic 3D sci-fi shoot 'em up. Based in the infinite expanse of deep space, the game bears little resemblance to its forebears, although for anyone interested in such things Volition, the team responsible, are an offshoot of Parallax, the creators of (you guessed it) *Descent*. And that's where the tenuous link between them begins and ends.

To all intents and purposes, *Freespace* is a space-based combat sim along the lines of countless others, although for brevity we'll compare it most rigorously to the *Wing Commander* series – *Prophecy* being the latest. The story behind *Freespace* is certainly nothing new. You are a rookie pilot (obviously), flying for the Galactic Terran Alliance. Currently you are at war with the Vasudans, an amphibious-looking bunch of guppies who are soon to become your allies as a mysterious alien race threatens both cultures. No prizes for originality, then, but a second-hand plot does not a second-rate game make.

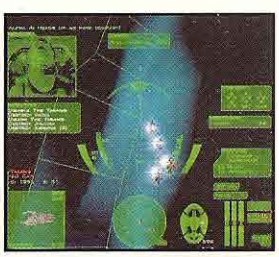
GREAT EXPECTATIONS

The first thing that grabs you about the game is the ease of use of all the controls. The HUD is a work of genius. Everything you need to know is but a millimetre of an eye's movement away and easy to read too – and without having your vision obscured by struts, flashing dials and fluffy dice. Acclimatisation is made even easier by spanning out the three tutorial sections through the first few missions. You start off learning the basics of flight and targeting, then get to try out your skills for real before going back to the classroom to learn about counter-measures. Genius, I tell you. Genius.

The other great thing about the game is the explosions. Score a couple of hits on a fighter and sparks fly and fire-trails flare out convincingly; a couple more hits



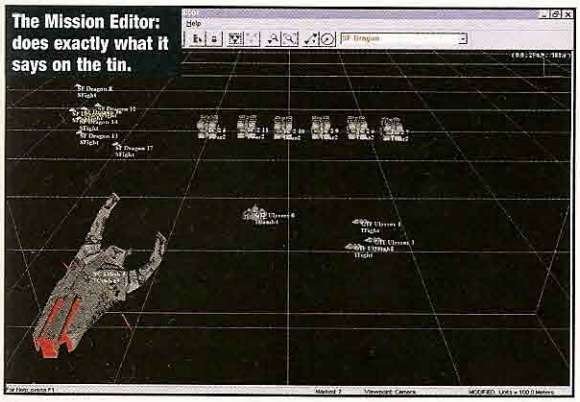
The Galatea's defence systems help you clear the asteroid field.



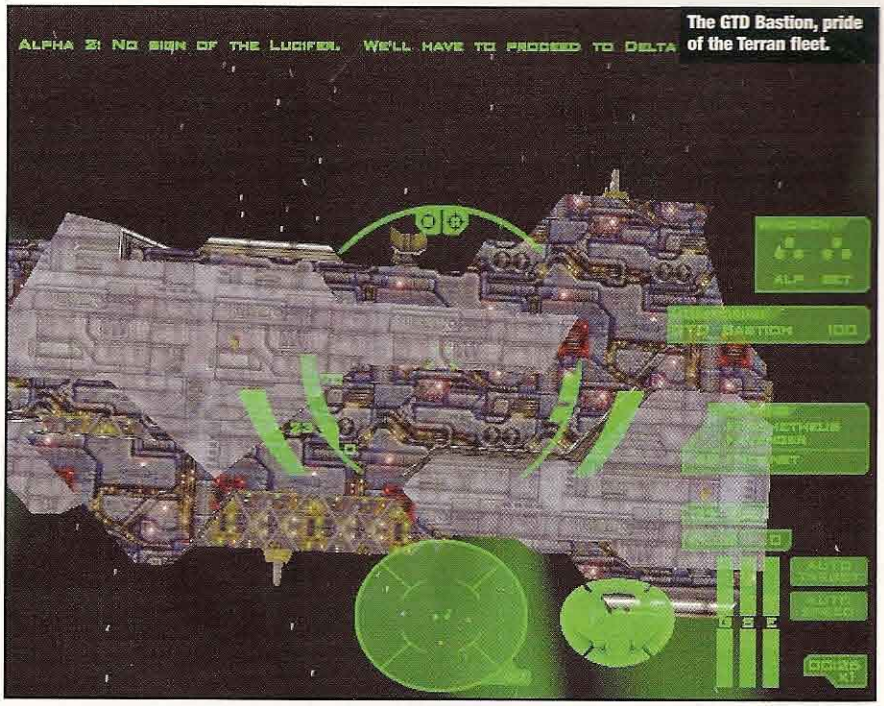
Shivan reinforcements arrive to support their ailing cruiser.

RIGHT SAID FRED

If you don't like the missions in *Freespace* (which is highly unlikely), then you could always design your own. The FRED Design program enables you to create both single- and multiplayer missions and campaigns. It might take a while to get used to setting up all the AI routines, but put the time in and you can have a homegrown mission pack on your hands that could put LucasArts' efforts to shame.



The Mission Editor: does exactly what it says on the tin.



The GTD Bastion, pride of the Terran fleet.

later and the ship explodes into a shower of debris, fizzing out into the blackness of space. Obviously the large capitol ships come apart in even more spectacular fashion, breaking in two and leaving great hulks of debris for you to avoid, all with electrical fires dancing across their surface. The whole game is full of the most spectacular effects; a retinal circus with your eyes walking unaided across a pit of fire… Or something like that.

GET YER ROCKS OFF

Of course, what makes a great game is not the eye-candy, which helps, but the AI and mission structure. In the past, missions have been far too linear for their own good. In *Prophecy* you either complete the mission or you don't; in *Freespace* you're given a number of objectives, only one of which is mandatory for success. The rest is just a bonus. For example, early on you have to guard a consignment of cargo until your watch is relieved. Stay on a while longer, however, and a Vasudan ace makes an appearance. Destroy him and he won't be around to throw his amphibian spanner in the works later on. Each mission carries on in much the same way: in some you might complete all the objectives fairly easily, in others you'll be hard-pushed to complete the main one. You can still move on though, and this edges up the replayability factor no end.

The missions themselves are suprisingly varied. The meat and veg of the game naturally involves escort duties, and your basic dog-fighting is central to that, but there are some other missions that stand out. One example that immediately springs to mind is where the Galatea, your main support ship, slides slowly through an asteroid field while you and your wingmen have to take out any asteroids that threaten it, as well as any surprise attacks from Vasudan fighters. The asteroids themselves don't just explode, but split into two – reminiscent of the old coin-op classic, no less.

IT DOESN'T STOP THERE...

Oh no, it gets better. The AI for your wingmen is also mighty impressive. You do have to fiddle through a few keys, but the speed with which your team-mates react to your orders makes up for the fumbling. Give them a target and they'll attack it with human precision. Fighter pilots will get stuck into dogfights and escort the bombers – who will actually hold back if they don't get enough cover. In fact you don't have to issue too many orders, because your comrades usually do the right thing. They'll order in a support unit if supplies are low and if the enemy aren't about. They'll even take out any fighters who've locked on to your six if their own isn't already occupied. And you can't ask for any more than that, can you?

In all honesty, there isn't much wrong with *Freespace*. It would have been nice if the developers had given your team-mates a bit more personality: one pilot dies and you get a new one next mission who'll be just as good; there really is no feel of responsibility to keep your best pilots alive, which is a bit of a lost opportunity. Another slight disappointment is the much-promised planetary missions. Initially *Freespace* was to have both space-based missions and missions where you could enter a planet's orbit. This would have made the game unique, but for some reason it hasn't happened. Maybe a job for *Freespace 2*.

IS IT?

A Classic? Well, no. From start to end, *Freespace* is as engaging a game as you'll ever see. The story, while wholly unoriginal, lends the game its epic feel. All the ships look and feel different, and the dogfighting is second to none. "Surely, then, this begs a Classic award," you say. Well, the only thing I can offer to counter *Freespace* is *Privateer 2*. Granted, *Freespace* just about beats every other space combat sim in all departments, but the depth of involvement in *Privateer 2* is second to none. You may think it an unfair comparison, but while playing *Freespace* it was difficult to lay the comparison aside.

Don't get me wrong, both novices and hardened space sim fans will get an awful lot out of this. If, however, you prefer a space sim with a bit more depth to it than completing a load of missions, you might want to wait for something else. But until the next big thing comes along you could do a hell of a lot worse than buy *Freespace*. Bloody marvellous, and no mistake. PCZ

ALSO CONSIDER

PRIVATEER 2 (EA Classics, £9.99) Now looking a bit old next to today's 3D-accelerated efforts, but an excellent story and plenty of depth make this one a winner, especially at this price. ***PCZ* #44, 94%**

WING COMMANDER: PROPHECY (EA, £39.99) The fifth in the series brings in a mysterious alien threat, poised to destroy Earth. Great updated graphics but all-too linear missions make this a formulaic and disappointing sequel. ***PCZ* #59 88%**

X-COM INTERCEPTOR (MicroProse, £34.99) "If *X-COM Interceptor* had the *Freespace* combat engine it would be nothing short of brilliant." So says Dep Ed Chris. ***PCZ* #65 87%**

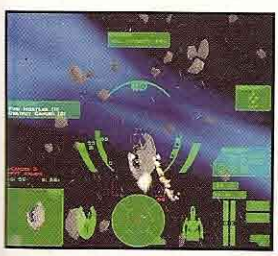
X-WING VS TIE FIGHTER (Virgin/ LucasArts, £34.99) Rebel scum take on the Empire in this damn fine space sim that was disappointing in single-player mode. But hey, it's *Star Wars* – who cares? ***PCZ* #52 89%**

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Sumptuous graphics, especially those explosions • Non-linear missions (sort of) • Impressive wingman AI • Lots of multiplayer options

DOWNERS Derivative and unoriginal storyline • Adds nothing fundamentally new to the genre • Gameplay isn't particularly deep • Where are the planetary missions?

89 As original as a *Wing Commander* rip-off can be



A Vasudan fighter weaves its way to certain death.



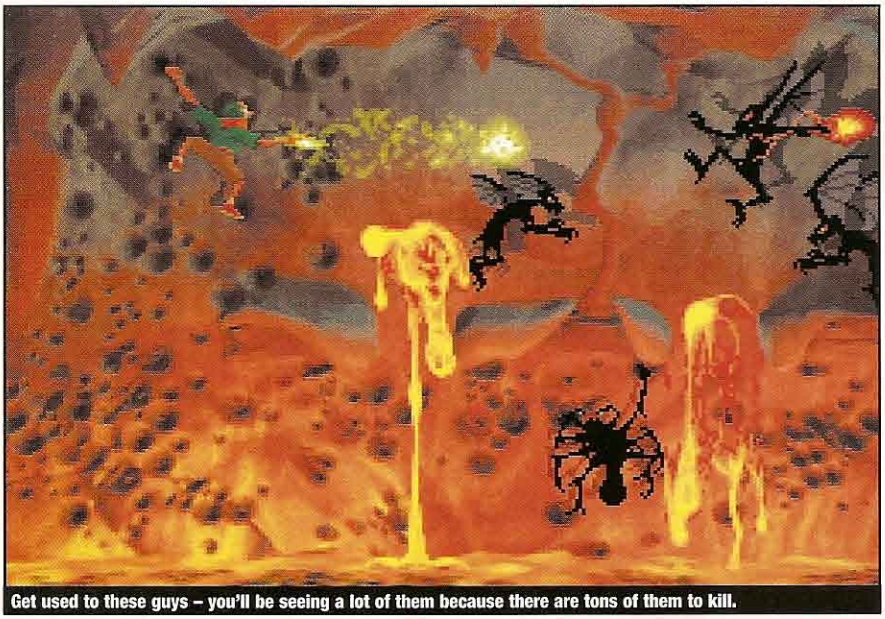
One minute you're protecting the ol' mothership…

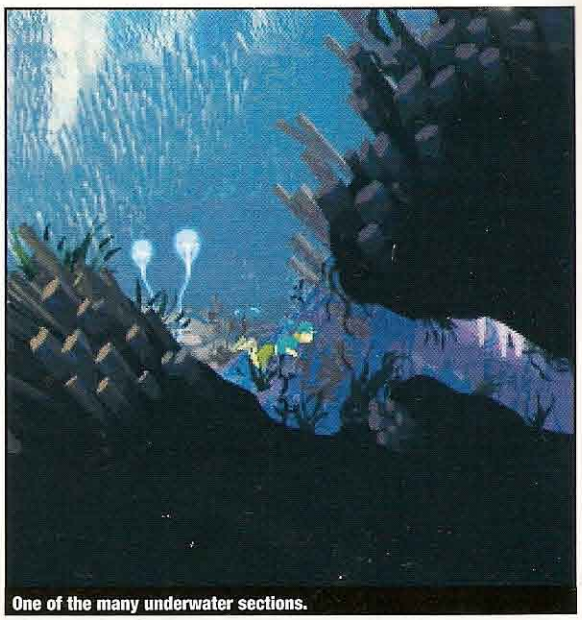


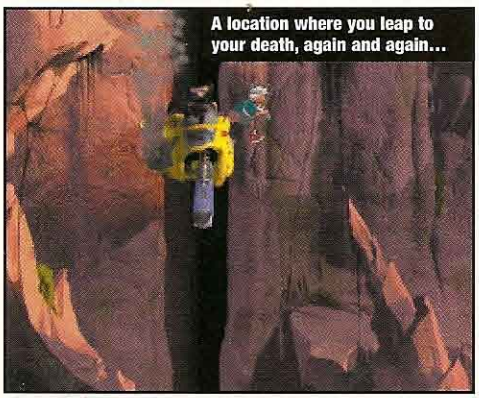
…and then someone goes and blows it up.



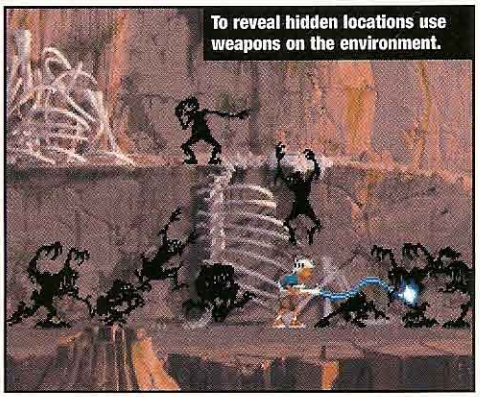
Still, the explosions look nice, that's the main thing.


Get used to these guys – you'll be seeing a lot of them because there are tons of them to kill.


One of the many underwater sections.


A location where you leap to your death, again and again...


Andy gets better weapons as he progresses through the game.


To reveal hidden locations use weapons on the environment.

HEART OF DARKNESS

£29.99 • Infogrames • Out now

After five years in development, *Heart Of Darkness* finally sees the light of day. *Chris Anderson* takes a trip down memory lane

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** 486DX2/66 **Memory** 16Mb **SUPPORTS** Windows-compatible sound card **WE SAY** For once we can't argue – it runs fine on a 486DX2/66

ALSO CONSIDER

FLASHBACK (Eidos, £4.99) The best example of platform/puzzle gameplay you'll ever find.
PCZ #56, 89%

ODDWORLD: ABE'S ODDYSEE (GT Interactive, £39.99) Clever puzzles, great characters, and it's funny.
PCZ #60, 81%

FADE TO BLACK (Electronic Arts, £9.99) A more 'grown-up' version of *Flashback*, still brilliant even now.
PCZ #31, 94%

Veteran gamers may remember a title called *Another World*. At the time of its release it was considered to be pretty ground-breaking stuff, with atmospheric graphics, and gameplay that was deemed (by some) to be challenging. Whether you would agree depends on how much you enjoy being given about ten seconds to solve a puzzle and then dying if you fail to do so.

That was about eight years ago. Thankfully things have moved on and the games industry has since recognised that people do not enjoy being punished with death for failing to solve an obscure puzzle. Unfortunately, Amazing Studios seem to have been living in an underground bunker for the five years it took them to produce *Heart Of Darkness*, leading to a misunderstanding between them and the rest of the gaming community as to what constitutes entertaining gameplay. You may have guessed by now that *Another World* and *Heart Of Darkness* have a lot in common.

DO OR DIE

The objective of the game is to guide Andy, the hero, through various levels filled with nasty monsters and fairly simple puzzles. Fair enough, you might think – after all, *Abe's Oddysee* was pretty good. However, it is no exaggeration to say that this is one of the most annoying games I have ever had the misfortune to play.

Make a note of the fact I use the word 'annoying' and not 'taxing'. This is not a difficult game to get through, although I doubt that any of you will complete much of it because you'll probably have thrown your gamepad at the screen after about an hour's play.



GRIPPING STUFF...

Picture the scene: Andy is surrounded by monsters. A lot of them. After much faffing about, ducking and diving and chucking fireballs around, Andy kills them all and moves on to the next screen... where he finds another huge group of monsters waiting for him.

Andy then goes through the same rubbish all over again, and eventually dispatches the second group of offending nasties and moves on to the next screen, where he finds he has to scale a wall. That is, a wall in the middle of another group of monsters.

While Andy's arsing about trying to find a grip in the wall, at the same time as chucking things at nasties, a big one-eyed blob appears. Unfortunately, the blob appears in the same piece of the wall Andy is occupying. Andy gets knocked off the wall, falls

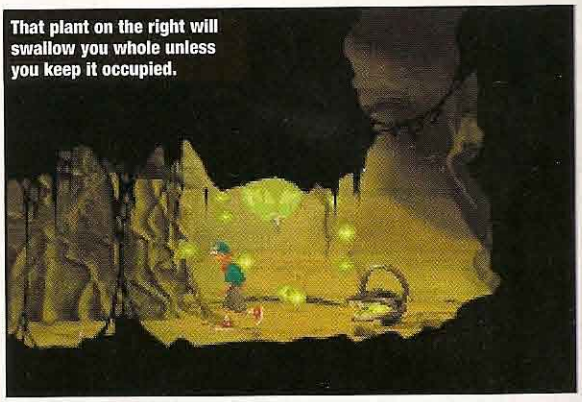
"Having to do everything again because of some completely unannounced and unexpected event is a pain in the arse"



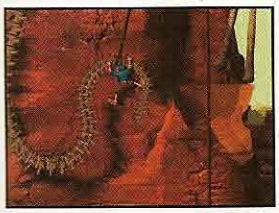
Check the landscape for hidden monsters – there's bound to be a few of them around.



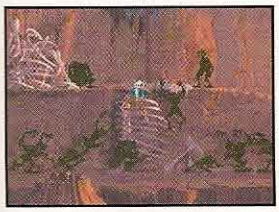
One false move here and Andy's dead. Quelle surprise.



That plant on the right will swallow you whole unless you keep it occupied.



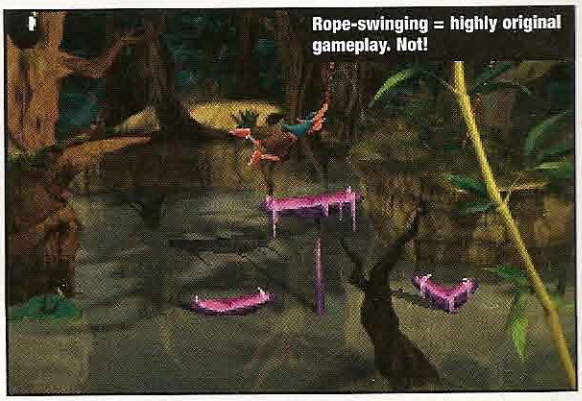
Protruding objects help Andy climb the walls.



Nowhere to hide; that'll be another big fight coming up then.



Lava-hopping features quite heavily in the game. As does dying when Andy doesn't quite make it, loses his footing and lands right in it.



Rope-swinging = highly original gameplay. Not!

into a big group of monsters and promptly dies.

Andy then comes back to life at the same point where the first group of monsters were, and discovers to his amazement that he has to go through every screen again, doing exactly the same things until he gets back to the scene where the offending blob first appeared. Andy turns his computer off and tells *Heart Of Darkness* it can go f**k itself.

OH DEAR

This chain of events is quite common in *Heart Of Darkness*. The puzzles are not particularly difficult and the monsters can be dispatched quite easily. But having to do everything again just because of some completely unannounced and unexpected event is laborious some of the time, and a complete pain in the arse the rest of it.

To make matters worse, the low-res graphics (320x200, anyone?) dictate that the game has to be played in a ridiculous letterbox – a complete giveaway that *Heart Of Darkness* should have arrived on the shelves about three years ago.

And it's a little difficult to imagine a PC gaming community brought up on a diet of first-person shooters and real-time strategy games warming to something that puts you in control of a little kid as he makes his way through a fairytale environment. *Actually, Infogrames have an* answer for that one: *Heart Of Darkness* is apparently aimed at a younger audience. Yeah, of course it is. Nothing's more likely to keep the little ones quiet than a stop-start platform game that kills them every five seconds. How silly of us.

It's actually quite a shame that *Heart Of Darkness* has turned out to be such a disappointment. *Flashback* was a very similar game and everyone – including myself – played it to death. *Flashback*, however, did not kill you every time you moved.

Despite the negative tone of this review, there are probably people out there (those with masochistic tendencies spring to mind) who will get a kick out of this type of thing. In my opinion, such people deserve everything they get. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

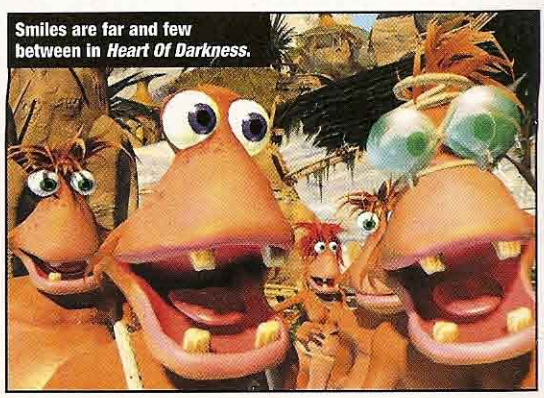
UPPERS Impressive FMV • Er, that's about it, really

DOWNERS Dated graphics • Dated gameplay • You'll want to kill it before it kills you

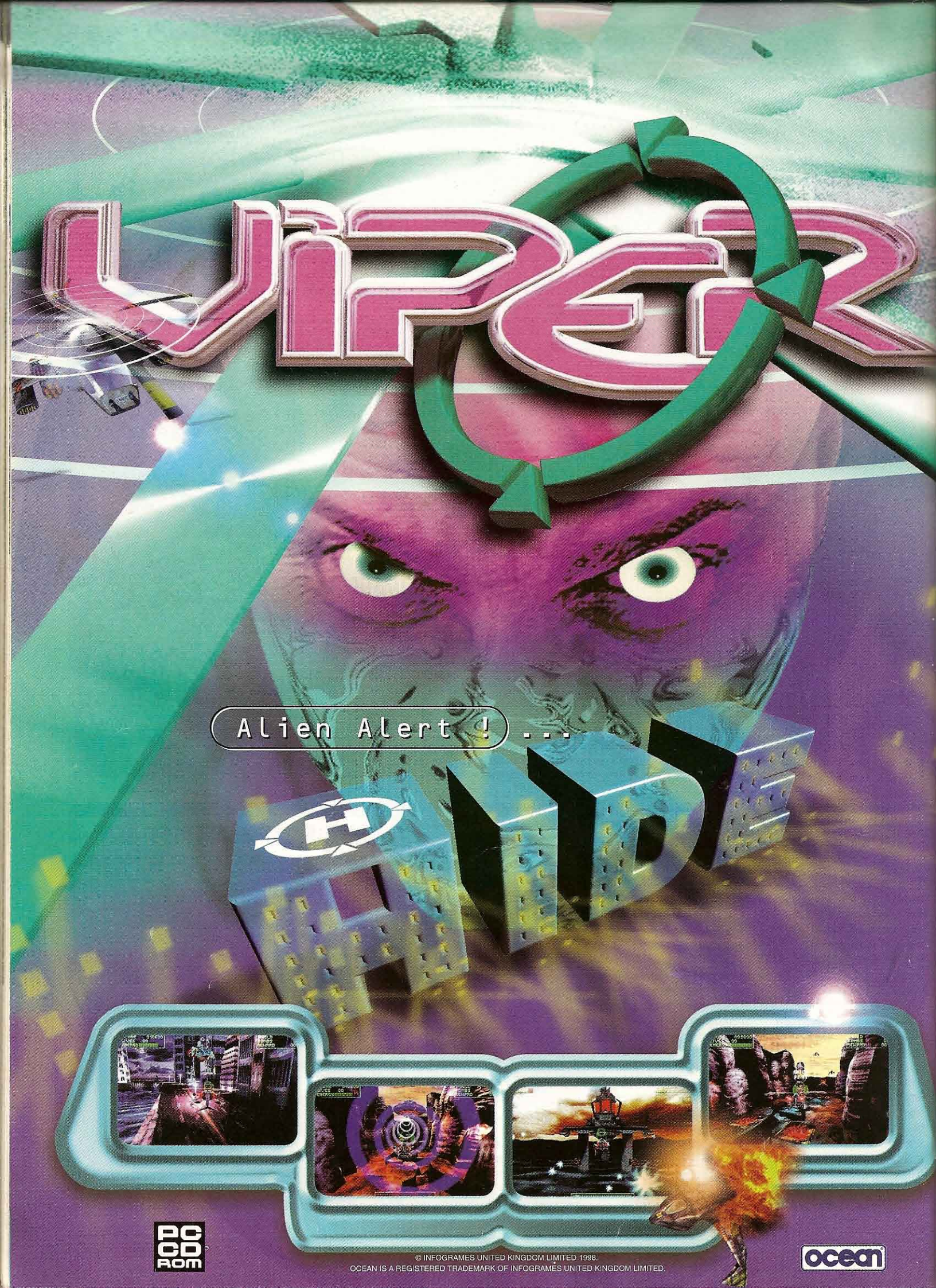
55 **Hey, man, it's like, old, and dated, you know?**

FOXY FMV

There are many cut-scenes in the game (and an intro that seems to go on forever that you can't quit out of) and some of them are quite impressive, despite the fact that they obviously weren't produced using today's state-of-the-art graphics technology. Unfortunately, they don't *make the game any more fun to play. Oh well.*

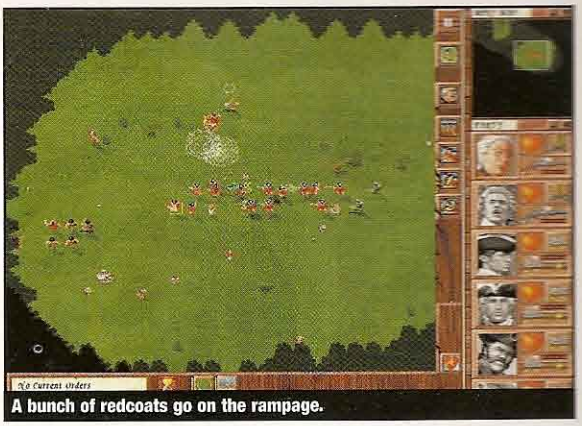


Smiles are far and few between in *Heart Of Darkness*.

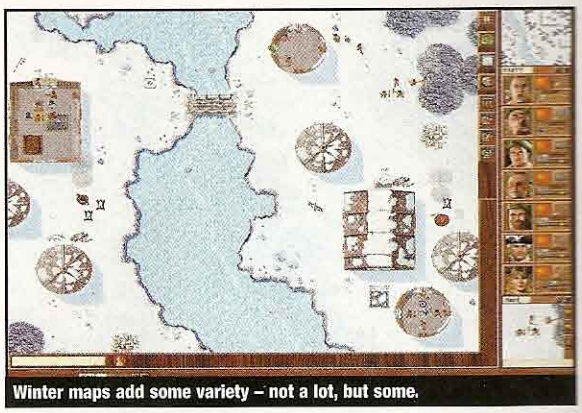

VIPER
Alien Alert ! ...
PC CD ROM
© INFOGRAMES UNITED KINGDOM LIMITED 1998.
OCEAN IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF INFOGRAMES UNITED KINGDOM LIMITED.
ocean



Big Chief Bald Git dropped a lighted match and the party was over...



A bunch of redcoats go on the rampage.


Winter maps add some variety – not a lot, but some.

FIELDS OF FIRE

£34.99 • Empire Interactive • Out July

What do you get if you cross a wargame with an RPG? *Andrew Wright* finds out

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P90 **Memory** 16Mb **Also requires** 4x CD-ROM
SUPPORTS Direct3D-compatible graphics card, network play, Internet play **WE SAY** P133 and 32Mb RAM recommended

At first glance, *Fields Of Fire* looks uncomfortably like one of those old Impressions wargames – complete with naff-to-average graphics, a boring overhead view and simplistic controls. So what's it doing on sale in 1998?

Fields Of Fire is a cross between an 18th century musket-and-shot wargame and a role-playing adventure set in the American colonies in the 1750s. You play the part of any one of 40 characters, from rangers to redcoats, Mohawk Indians to upper-class idiots. They in turn command an almost unlimited number of subordinates, either militiamen, braves or privates.

You can improve your characters along the way by picking up extra equipment – if you want to buy it you have to raise cash by erasing the wildlife from the map and selling their skins. Your characters can also learn skills such as tracking, trapping, controlling bears and all kinds of daft camouflage tricks.

There are 17 missions, ranging from ambushing an enemy patrol to rescuing prisoners, blowing up bridges and storming forts with cannon fire and explosives. You direct your men around the rather cartoon-like map, which has all the terrain features you'd expect, such as hills, rivers, trees and boulders. Much of it is impassable cliff or rock but it still manages to confuse the AI, which isn't very good at the best of times.

Fields Of Fire suffers from the same disease that seems to infect all strategy games, namely an AI that thinks a route is blocked just because somebody else happens to be using it at that point in time. We can build computers that fly billion-dollar fighter planes or that can search the equivalent of a public library in seconds, so why can't we build AI that realises that a character moving through a door won't be there a second or two later?

It takes around ten minutes to get through each of the missions, so it won't take you long to complete all of them. Worse still, there's only one way to complete most of them. Once you've worked that out, it's goodbye to any further lateral thinking.

RANDOM FACTOR

There's a random element in the form of native Americans who constantly attack your cosy lifeless little cartoon fort. You've got to keep a garrison in or around the gates and order reinforcements when you need them. I say 'around the gates' because you won't see the enemy doing anything as clever as scaling the walls.

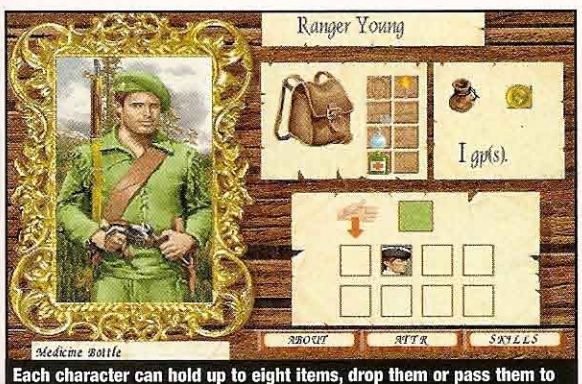
To liven things up – a fraction – you can play head-to-head via modem or serial link, or with up to four players over the Internet. In this mode, *Fields Of Fire* shrugs off any pretence at being an RPG and turns into a mildly amusing strategy game where each player sneaks around one of the 20-odd maps, peering through the fog of war and trying to spring surprises and traps on the other player. It's a good way to spend an hour or two, but no more... PCZ

ALSO CONSIDER

ULTIMA VII (Electronic Arts, £29.99) *Ultima VII* is the closest game to *Fields Of Fire*. Wrong period but similar overhead style and play. *PCZ* #3, 89%

WARLORDS III (Brøderbund, £34.99) Wrong setting (fantasy), but similar overhead graphics and better gameplay. *PCZ* #55, 90%

SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG (Electronic Arts, £34.99) A better choice if you're into musket-and-shot – it's more realistic and a lot less trite. *PCZ* #57, 90%



Each character can hold up to eight items, drop them or pass them to other characters.


Explosives and man-traps are just a few of the items on special offer at Fort Do-it-all.

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Set in a refreshingly different era • Absorbing mix of strategy and role playing • Real English voices

DOWNERS No skirmish mode or scenario editor • Early 1990s graphics • Irritating sound effects

67 Half-decent attempt at blending an RPG with a wargame

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TOTAL ANNIHILATION: CORE CONTINGENCY





£19.99 • GT Interactive • Out now

If you can't teach an old dog new tricks, give him something new to chew on. *Richie Shoemaker* readies his real-time molars

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **Also requires** 4x CD-ROM; full copy of *Total Annihilation* **WE SAY** A P200 will do nicely but you'll need plenty of RAM to play the largest maps – up to 128Mb! Oh, and if you don't already have one, do yourself a favour and get a modem

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

ALSO CONSIDER

www.totalannihilation.com
If you're unsure whether to splash out on *Core Contingency*, try before you buy by pointing your browser at the official website where you can download new units, maps and a load of other stuff. You could also try the UK site affiliated with Wireplay, which has a few third-party add-ons (**www.totalannihilation.co.uk**).



ARM hover units raid a CORE outpost on Luschworld.

Whether you see add-ons as rip-offs depends on how much you liked the original game. Fans lapped up the lacklustre *Red Alert: Counterstrike* (*PCZ* #51, 80%), just as fans of *TA* (*PCZ* #56, 92%) will lap this up. But *Core Contingency*, the first expansion pack for Cavedog's classic, is heaven-sent.

It has more units than the entire *C&C* series. Many have been available for download for a while already, but with over 70 extra vehicles and buildings for single and multiplayer games, you wonder what Cavedog could possibly do with the next add-on that could make *TA* any better.

Actually, that's easy. The main weakness of *TA* was in the single-player campaign missions, and it's the same here. While there are two new campaigns (one for each side), progression is a steady grind, with no real depth of involvement – due in part to boring between-mission narration (no cut-scenes here). The new missions and environments are well-constructed, and although the AI still seems a bit sticky they offer a strategic wealth of options. Don't be deceived – the missions are easily on a par with the originals. But if you found yourself skipping them and playing skirmish games instead, you'll probably do the same here. It can be a soulless advance, but persevere through the water-borne missions and they do get steadily better.

DEATHMATCHTASTIC

Multiplayers and skirmishers will get the most from this pack. The best enhancement is resource sharing: allies can now pool their energy and metal reserves as well as mapping information. This lends the game a new diplomatic angle where lone players can ill-afford to take on pairs alone. For the serious multiplayer, there are new shortcut keys. Even factories can be assigned to squads – their combined output is automatically born into the same team.

The new terrains are a mixed bag; the water terrain can be dull, and on Luschworld units get obscured in the dense foliage. Conversely, the urban wasteland is fun and offers a lot of scope for multiplayer battles. It would be nice to be able to alter the terrain, perhaps by digging trenches or building platforms on the sea, but maybe we'll see that in the sequel.

The hover-based craft make up the bulk of the new units, but notable lovelies include the Maverick (top-looking ARM Kbot), the Podger (multiple mine-layer), Decoy Commanders and the mammoth CORE Krogoth, a heavily-armed walking nightmare. If you're still getting used to the original units you may find *Core Contingency* heavy going; it seems to take ages to learn what tactical advantage can be gained from such a bewilderingly large arsenal.

If you've downloaded the latest patch and the extra units from Cavedog's website, you may feel short-changed, as you'll already have resource-sharing, 20 new units and a few new maps; *Core* delivers 50 or so new units and two new campaigns and a mission editor. Actually, that's a fair bit... Well done, Cavedog. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Loads of new units and maps • Comprehensive mission editor • Multiplayer games are even better – no, really

DOWNERS Resource sharing, some units and the mission editor are available as a free download (see the coverdisc on last month's *PC Zone*) • Water-borne missions are a bit wet • The final 'secret' mission runs like a pig (even on a P233 with 64Mb RAM)

87 It's quite simply the Cavedog's bollocks



The lights go out for the CORE commander.



Amphibious assault to take the CORE base.

A WORLD IN A DAY



Create your map, plant trees and robots, then (gulp) add the AI.

Now you've got the tools, make your own maps and campaigns

God may have taken seven days to create the world, but he obviously didn't have *TA*'s map and mission editor on his altar-top PC. Granted, it's not as easy to use as *Dark Reign*'s, but if you want to create a decent simple multiplayer map it only takes a few hours; creating a full-blown campaign with between-mission dialogue could take a little longer.

INTERNATIONAL CRICKET CAPTAIN

£44.99 • Empire Interactive • Out now

An international cricket management game is a weird idea. So we gave it to *Patrick McCarthy*, whose very existence is a truly bizarre idea

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **SUPPORTED** Windows 95, mouse, DirectX5.0 **WE SAY** A P133 is fine

While there are almost as many football management games as there are people who'd like to punch Caroline Quentin in the face, the number of cricket management games can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Assuming the hand belongs to a grass-snake. But now there is one – and it's something of a false premise.

THAT'S ILLOGICAL, CAPTAIN

For a start, it's called *International Cricket Captain*. If you're a captain in cricket, you don't simply tell people where to stand, where to bowl or how to bat and leave them to get on with it, you play a bit of cricket yourself (unless you're Mike Brearley). Whereas if you're a manager, you sit about on balconies wearing sunglasses 30 years too young for you and spout bollocks about why England aren't as bad as everyone thinks they are (unless you're Ray Illingworth, in which case you lead the slagging – ideally just before an important Test).

And that's why *ICC* is so weird. You're basically a non-playing captain, making all the decisions then sitting back to watch. Literally.

The action's played out by nicely animated miniature players. They look pretty good, although they do seem to be playing in a bowl, because the perspective of the pitch is the reverse of what it should be.

The sound effects are okay. There's commentary by Jonathan Agnew – which is limited and doesn't mention people getting a half-century or a 100 partnership or whatever. We're told that more will be added by the time the game's released, though. It's a shame they chose the pompous Agnew and not one of the more entertaining commentators: Henry Blofeld, or Aussie Neville Oliver – or just about anyone, really. But that's another matter.

LIES, DAMNED LIES, AND...

You can set the highlights level to watch the match on a ball-by-ball basis (which is more dull than watching Ken Barlow having sex) or according to specific events. And there are any number of fancy graphical displays showing shot-placement charts, run rates or whatever. The thing is, I can't get over the intrinsically passive approach. The appeal of a football management game is obvious: take your favourite team and transform them. You can't do that in cricket; there's no snapping up Waqar Younis and Alan Donald in a mid-season transfer coup. So you're left with a tactics-based game that supposedly plays strictly to the stats. Except, of course, that because you're playing a cheating bastard computer (astonishingly, there's no two-player option of any kind) they never seem to...

"You can set the highlights level to watch the match on a ball-by-ball basis, which is more dull than watching Ken Barlow having sex"

TRICK ME, BABY

In any sports management game, 90 per cent of the battle is tricking us, the punters, into thinking it's real. But with *ICC* it's hard to see any difference in results according to pitch condition, where my bowlers pitched the ball, how the field was set, or what the batsman's supposed strengths were. I kept playing because I love cricket games. Maybe you'll do the same. But I also kept getting slightly pissed off with it.

It's not a bad game, but I can't see why they don't incorporate an arcade element. Every baseball game known to man gives you a stats-only management option with a far greater in-depth level of decision-making for geeks, but they've always also included arcade options for those of us with a central nervous system. If *ICC* had a decent arcade option it would be better. As it is, it's occasionally absorbing, but usually just frustrating. PCZ

ALSO CONSIDER

EA CRICKET (EA, £TBA) The only other PC cricket game. Batting, bowling and Benaud. ***PCZ* #49, 80%**

TRIPLE PLAY 99 (EA, £44.99) Baseball with more tactical elements than *ICC*, and infinitely better commentary and visuals. ***PCZ* #64, 90%**

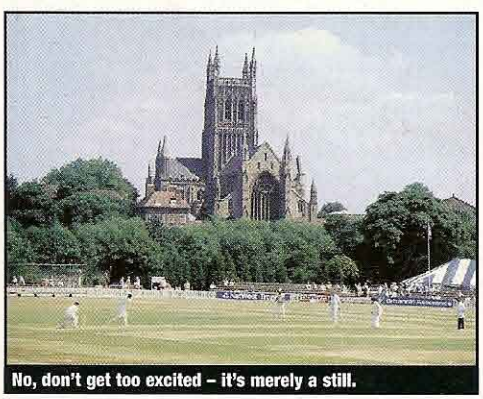
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2 (Eidos, £24.99) If you want management addiction, buy *CM2* (even if it is summer). ***PCZ* #56, 92%**

PCZ VERDICT

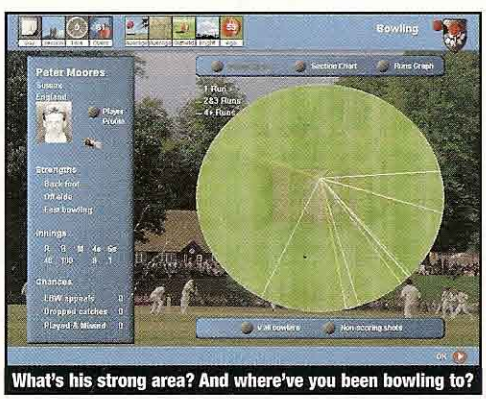
UPPERS Nice animation • Good crickety feel

DOWNERS Your decisions don't seem to affect the outcome • Cricket doesn't lend itself to management • No multiplayer option

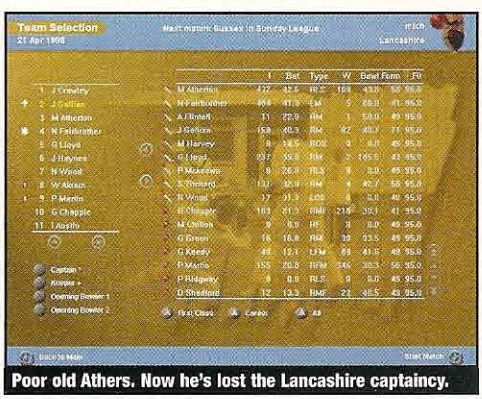
68 Decidedly more Alan Igglesden than Alan Donald



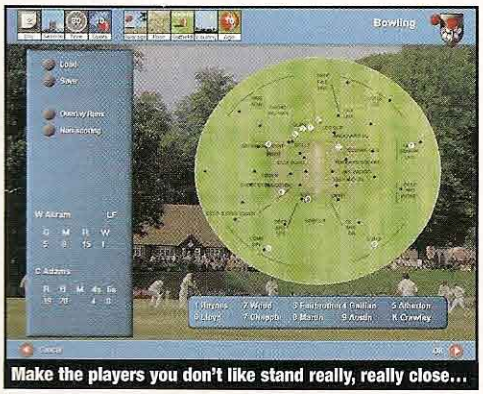
No, don't get too excited – it's merely a still.



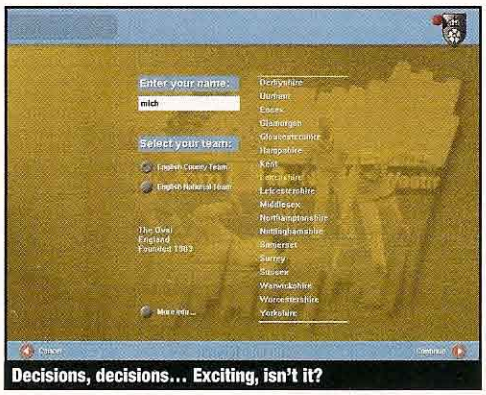
What's his strong area? And where've you been bowling to?



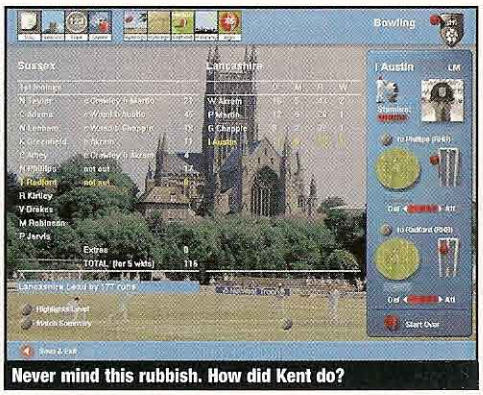
Poor old Athers. Now he's lost the Lancashire captaincy.



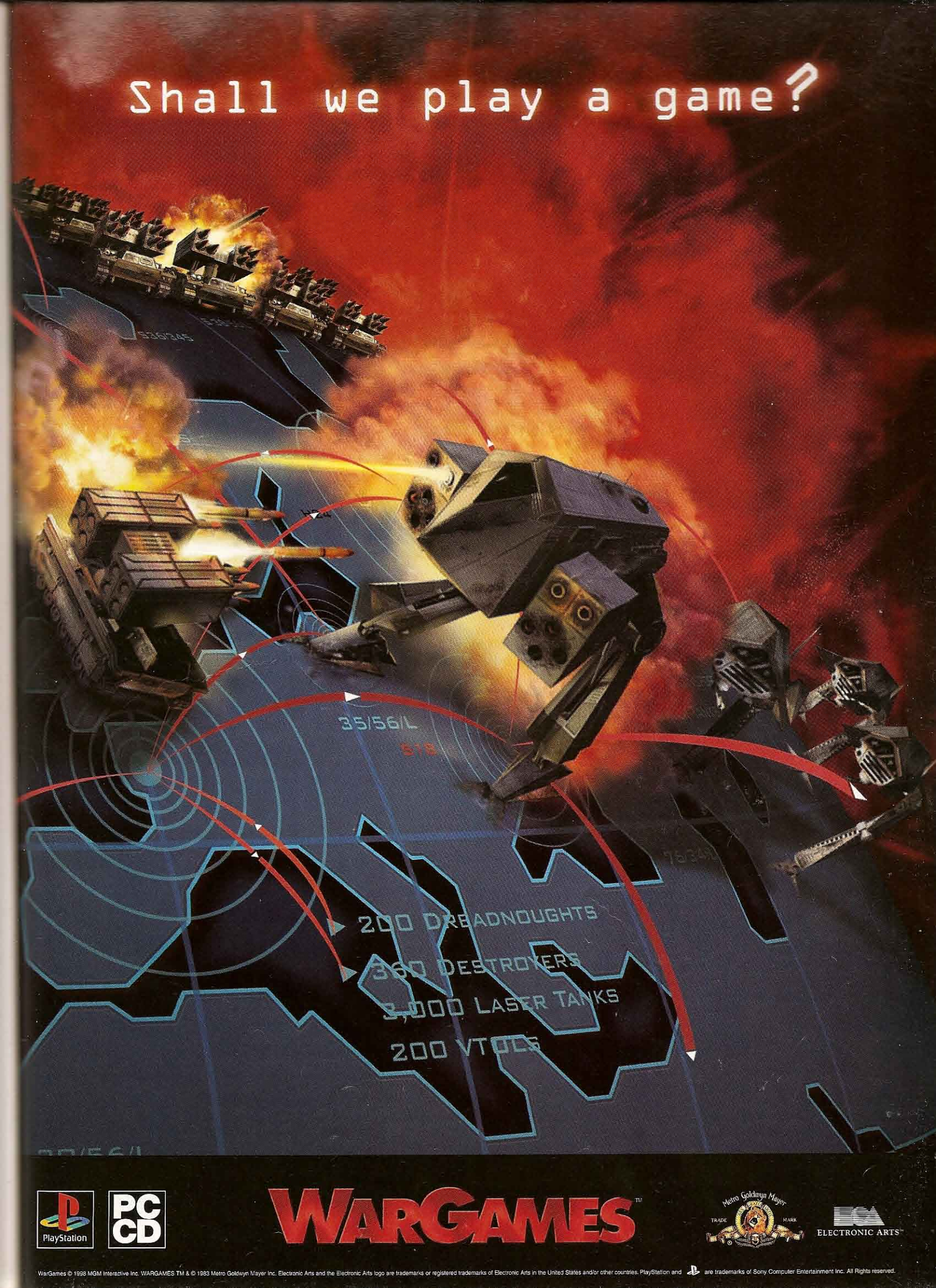
Make the players you don't like stand really, really close...



Decisions, decisions... Exciting, isn't it?



Never mind this rubbish. How did Kent do?



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Fields of Fire
WAR ALONG THE MOHAWK





Based during the French-Indian war in the 1700's, FIELDS OF FIRE: *War Along The Mohawk*™ is a challenging, historical game where role-playing meets real-time strategy. Grow your character through the American conflicts, learn new skills and acquire wealth and power while managing real-time battles and looking after your base, resources, and friends.

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HOUSE OF THE DEAD

"Blast an axe-wielding zombie in the arm and his whole arm drops off"

£34.99 • Sega • Out now

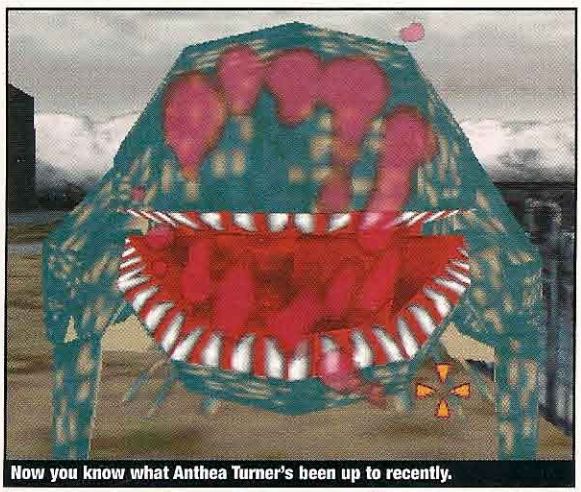
Fancy starring in a Hammer horror movie? *Chris Yacomini* finds himself with a bunch of hormonally-charged zombies

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **SUPPORTED** Soundblaster/compatible, Direct 3D cards, 3D glasses, Lightgun **WE SAY** P133 is fine provided you have the now essential 3D card; software rendering chugs along on anything less than a P166



Don't lie to me you filthy corpse, I can see right through you.



Now you know what Anthea Turner's been up to recently.

Have you ever thought what it would be like to star in a Hammer horror movie? If the answer is yes, you can consider your life now officially complete. Sega have managed to wrap their Model-2-powered arcade game *Virtua Cop* (*PCZ* #46, 78%), which has already seen a PC release, around a *Resident Evil* (*PCZ* #56, 83%)-style scenario. The obligatory mansion house and chemical labs are intact, replete with diseased animated corpses and rabid undead dogs.

House Of The Dead is an 'on-rails' shoot 'em up, which means you go where the camera takes you and shoot anything that comes at you. If you're unfamiliar with the style of play, preferring instead the freedom of something like *Quake*, then you'll probably hate the constricting nature. This game requires nothing but quick reactions; *Quake* at least requires instinct and cunning.

However, there are certain points in levels where your actions determine which 'rail' you will take. For example, the first bridge you come to on level one sees a zombie carrying one of the scientists towards the edge with the intention of throwing him over the side. If you manage to take out the zombie without killing the scientist, he is dropped to the floor and gives you one extra life, and you then proceed across the bridge and into the mansion. If you are too late, however, he is flung over the bridge. You then have to travel down a set of stairs only to see him disfigured on the brick floor, mumbling to himself.

ARCADE MACHINE AT HOME

Like most arcade-to-home translations, *House Of The Dead* has the inherent problem of being a bit on the short side. Although the various routes do give some variety throughout the game, it's not one of those games that you'll either play for months on end or come back to time and time again. If you've spent enough time and money on previous versions, you'll probably complete the game in a couple of hours. And if you were hoping to get in on some two-player, split-screen action, forget it. The unlucky keyboard-playing participant will not be happy.

If you have a Direct3D-compatible video card, *House Of The Dead* looks very close to its arcade counterpart. Walking into the huge mansion house, guns ablaze and tearing undead minions apart has never looked so good. Blast an axe-wielding zombie in the arm and not only will he drop the axe, but his whole arm will also drop with it!

Although the 3D models look and move well, the 2D sprites can sometimes look a bit odd. You'll remember in *Doom* when you looked at a dead body and moved 180 degrees around it, only to find it facing the same direction. Well that raises its ugly head in the form of trees and bushes in this game, giving the backdrops a 'cardboard'-like appearance.

The addition of a 'PC Mode' enables you to change characters you play as in the arcade game, and each has different attributes: for example, one character may give more damage per shot but have a smaller hit radius.

One thing you have to keep in mind is not to tinker about with the 'auto-reload' option. This, in effect, relaxes the need for you to reload your weapon once you've fired off a particular weapon's payload, thus making the game *much* easier to complete.

ALSO CONSIDER

VIRTUA COP 1 & 2 (Sega, £14.99 & £34.99) The games that started the whole thing off. Pick-up-and-play game mechanics and excellent graphics (especially *Virtua Cop2*).
PCZ #46, 78%

AREA 51 (Williams, £29.99) Based around a break in at the alleged top-secret US Air Force base in America. Sports cardboard characters against cardboard backgrounds.
NOT REVIEWED

RESIDENT EVIL (VIE, £44.99) Highly atmospheric action adventure along the lines of *Alone In The Dark*. Loads of zombies and gore flying about, and you'll need a change of underwear to complete it. Scarier and more involving by far.
PCZ #56, 83%

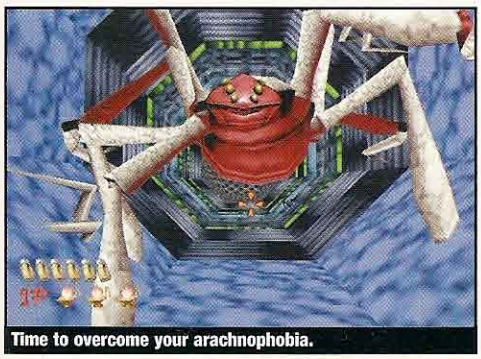
All in all, this is a top-class conversion of a top-class game. You won't get spectators in the background cheering you on, and the mouse is no substitute for a fake plastic gun. But if you liked the *Virtua Cop* series you should lap this up. *House of the Dead* is a fine addition to a genre that's most at home in windswept beachfront arcades. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Great atmosphere • Very easy to pick up • Runs well in software mode (on a fast enough machine) • You get to shoot a lot

DOWNERS 'Cardboard' backdrops • Unlikely you'll do it more than twice • Two-player mode sucks

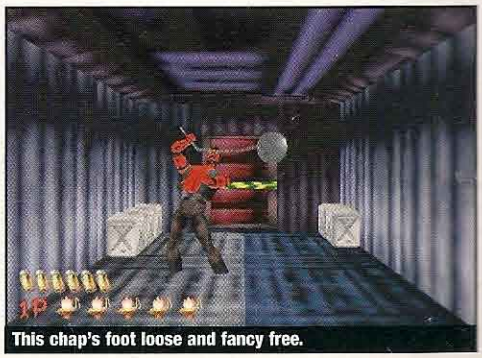
76 Short-lived, blood-soaked mayhem



Time to overcome your arachnophobia.



Mr Universe shows off to the cameras.



This chap's foot loose and fancy free.

PANZER COMMANDER

£39.99 • Mindscape • Out now

As the tanks engage each other, the only person on foot on the smoking battlefield is a lonely *Richie Shoemaker*

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** Direct3D-compatible graphics card highly recommended as well as 32Mb RAM

After being unsurprisingly disappointed by Interactive Magic's *iPanzer '44* a couple of months back, I had high hopes for this title after playing the demo. Initially things looked very rosy indeed. Aside from everything else, the graphics are pretty stunning to say the least. Smoking barrels, tank tracks and recoil all make the game feel realistic, although the way in which buildings and tanks meet their end is woefully weedy. Thankfully it's all backed up by some meaty sounds - although the British tank crew have some decidedly dodgy accents.

You will have guessed, then, that *Panzer Commander* is a WWII tank sim, faithfully recreating over 40 tanks from the era including my personal favourite, the British Matilda. You can play a number of one-off missions for either the Germans, Russians, Americans or British, though if you want to engage in one of the two campaigns you have to side with either the Hun or the Ruskies.

So far it all looks very promising. But soon after you've completed a couple of missions, it all goes pear-shaped. Even though the single missions are varied and the linked campaign's are laudably based on historical events, there are a number of gaping flaws in the gameplay.

First and foremost is the ineffectual way in which you direct the tanks under your command. Because all the waypoints are preordained, and because there is no way to switch between them, you have to lead your tanks to where you want them to go. In effect this means that you usually end up just roaming around en masse, negating any tactical element to the game. If it wasn't for the missions being time-limited you could successfully work around this. As it stands though, *Panzer Commander* is closer to being a complicated action game rather than the tactical simulation it pretends to be.

Another area where the game loses ground is in the exclusion of any infantry units. There are gun emplacements holding up your advance, but the game feels decidedly empty without any soldiers running around. Also, the AI and route-finding for your units is certainly below par – even if you forgive their initial inexperience. The map screen is also far too small – another hindrance to the tactical side of the game.

M1 Tank Platoon 2 is still the best tank sim, though for WWII buffs we'd have to grudgingly recommend this one. In a purely strategic light *iPanzer* is a lot better, though it has numerous other faults against it. It's a real shame *Panzer Commander* wasn't given more polish before it was wheeled out. As it stands it looks a peach. It's just a bit too quiet on the intelligence front. PCZ

ALSO CONSIDER

M1 TANK PLATTON 2 (Microprose, £39.99) So it's not WWII, but it's a better game in almost every way. *PCZ #63, 90%*

IPANZER '44 (Interactive Magic, £39.99) Graphically inferior and lacking in atmosphere, but superior in the strategy dept. *PCZ #64, 65%*

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Lovely graphics (if you've got a 3D card) • Loads of tanks to drive and dozens of missions

DOWNERS Where's the cannon fodder? • AI is a tad ropey • Tactically very weak

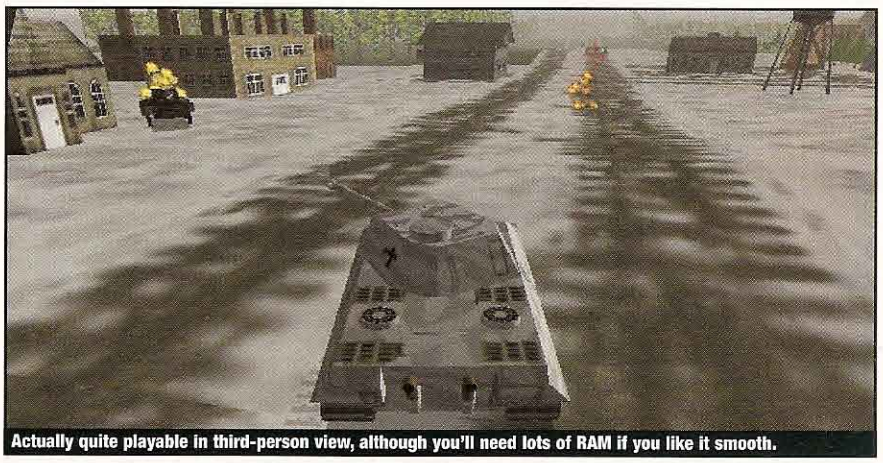
70 **Nice graphics, but hard-core sim-heads will be disappointed**



German Panzers, arguably the finest tank of WWII.

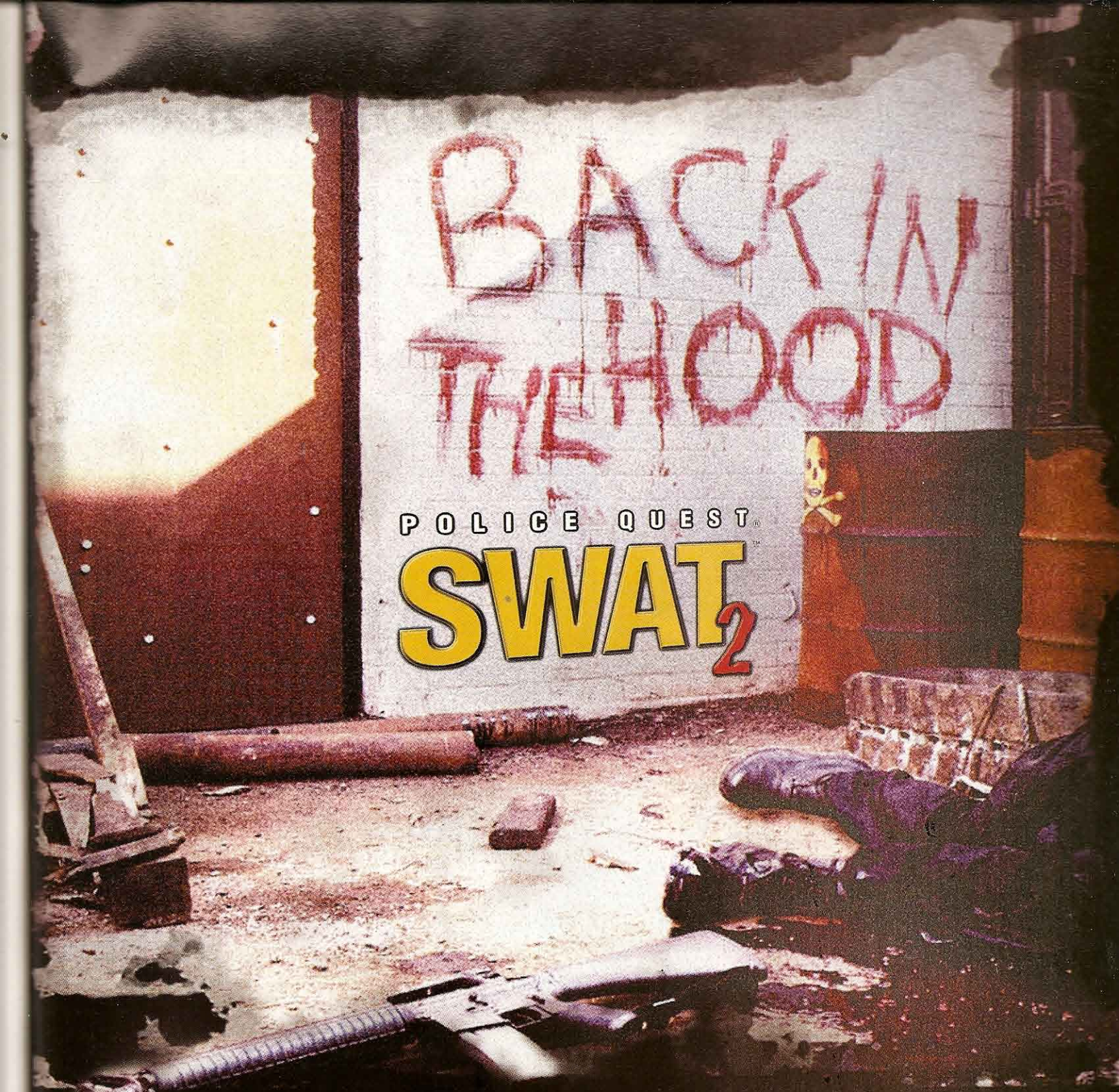

"Itler, 'as only got wun borl..." The English abroad – nothing changes.


Telly Savalas buys it again in the remake of *Battle Of The Bulge.*

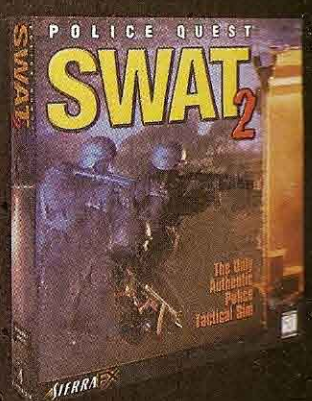

Actually quite playable in third-person view, although you'll need lots of RAM if you like it smooth.


Hull down in a superb strategic position.


The driver's view.



SWAT 2 is a Police Tactical simulation that utilises actual SWAT tactics and strategies, based on actual LAPD SWAT call-ups. Adversaries react to the players' strategies to produce a unique experience and extraordinary replayability. Choose from which side of the law you want to play - each with their own strengths and weaknesses. 30 missions of real time action for the ultimate game play. Join up to three other players with the multiplayer options.



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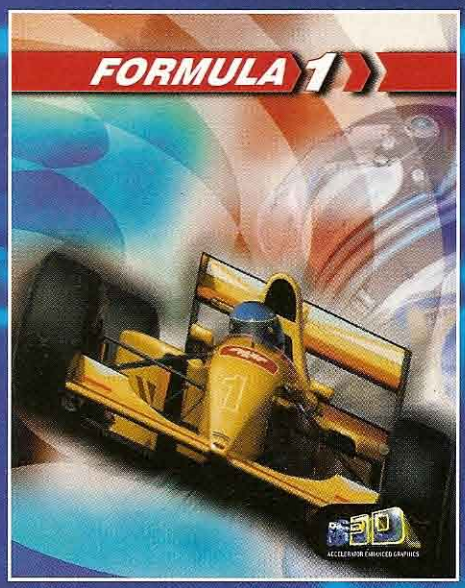
Minimum system requirements: Windows 95, Pentium 133, 16MB RAM, SVGA card, 4x CD ROM Drive. Windows compatible soundcard.
For further information contact: Cendant Software UK, 2 Beacontree Plaza, Gillette Way, Reading, Berkshire RG2 0BS Tel: 0118 920 9111

ARGENTUM COLLECTION

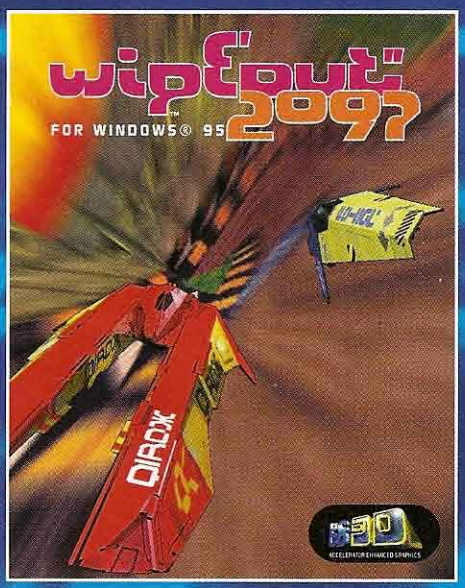
PSYGNOSIS

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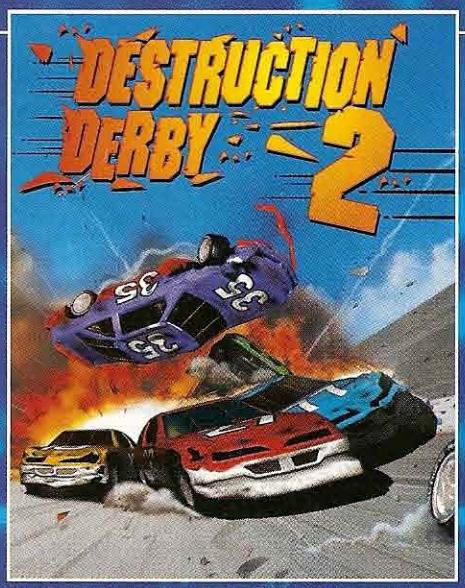
RED HOT RACING



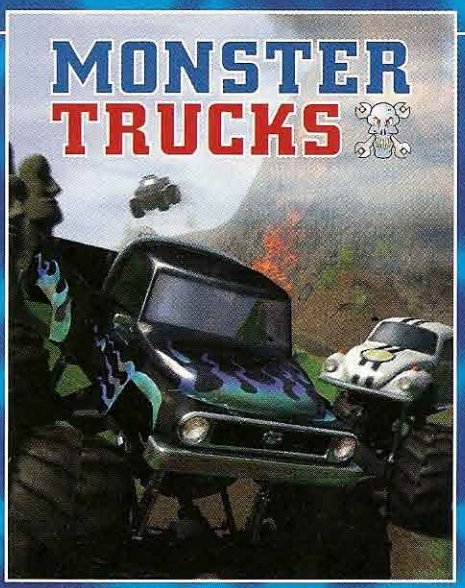
FORMULA 1



WIPEOUT 2097



DESTRUCTION DERBY 2



MONSTER TRUCKS

AT COOL PRICES

ARGENTUM COLLECTION

PSYGNOSIS

PC CD ROM

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HOPKINS FBI

£39.99 • Cryo • Out now

There's good, bad and poo but *Charlie Brooker* managed to find something even worse

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P100 **Memory** 16Mb
SUPPORTS All major sound cards **WE SAY** Don't do it

PCZONE PANTS

In the world of computer games – as in life – there are winners and losers. At the top end of the scale stand the timeless classics: endlessly playable landmarks like *Quake 2* or *Civilisation*. In the middle are the 'so-so' titles: games which, although competent, aren't really anything to write home about. And below them squat the real stinkers: the uninspiring, unplayable hunks of virtual dogshit which would insult the intelligence of a spoon. This ranks below even *them*.

Within seconds of booting up *Hopkins FBI*, you're acutely aware that something smells bad. The intro sequence is so ham-fistedly bad it beggars belief. They should've scrapped it entirely and used a still photograph of a horse pissing into a bucket instead. At least that'd be entertaining.

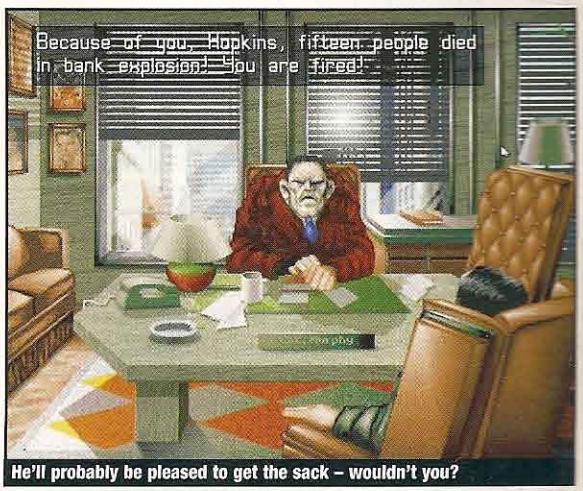
Impossibly, it goes downhill from there. The game itself is an old-school point-and-click adventure – and when we say old-school, we mean it. It looks dated; it looks at least three years old. The graphics are painfully amateurish, while the standard of animation on display makes *South Park* look like *Akira* by comparison. Given this abysmally low standard of visual workmanship, it's surprising to discover that the game's audio content is actually worse. The actors read their lines with the passion of a suicidal continuity announcer, and the intermittent background tunes are so poor as to defy lucid description. If weasels formed rock bands, they'd sound like this. Music fans will want to pluck notes from the air and beat them to death with hammers.

Shall we go on? Okay. The puzzles are illogical and contrived, the interface awkward and slow, and the lead character so instantly dislikeable you genuinely want him to kill him. In fact, the game is *so* bad that you can't help wondering whether it's been deliberately designed that way. Perhaps it's part of some shadowy quest to extend the boundaries of ineptitude, or maybe it's all an incredibly clever post-modern joke. Either way, the FBI should sue, because this game stinks of shit.

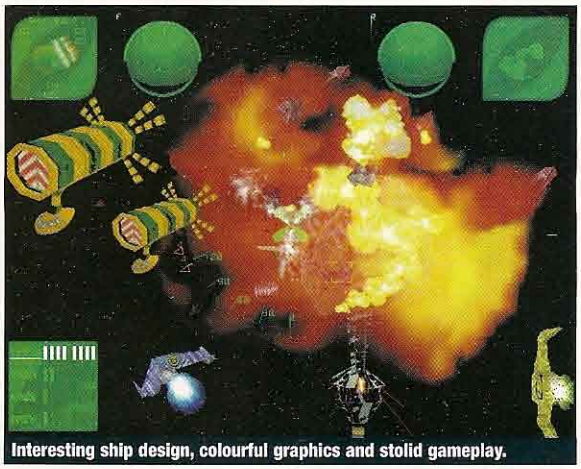
PCZVERDICT 4%

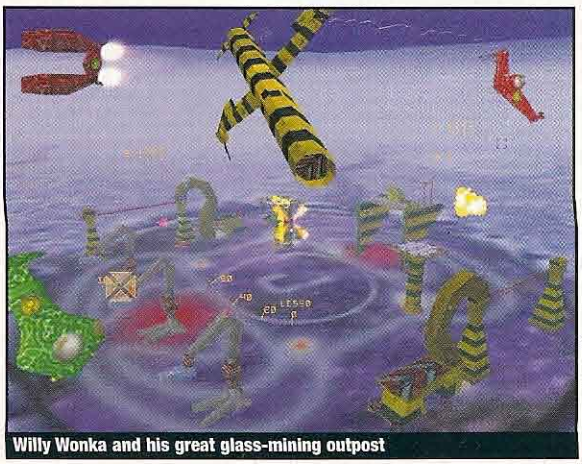


Go on then, do it, it's her own fault for appearing in such a crap game.



He'll probably be pleased to get the sack – wouldn't you?


Interesting ship design, colourful graphics and stolid gameplay.


Willy Wonka and his great glass-mining outpost

XENOCRACY

£39.99 • Grolier Interactive • Out now

***Another* action game. *Adam Taylor* treads a well-worn path**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 16Mb RAM
Also requires 10Mb hard disk space and 2Mb SVGA card **WE SAY** More hard drive space and a 3Dfx card would be handy

The fate of mankind is in your hands. Again. A four-way interplanetary war is brewing between Earth, Mars, Venus and Mercury. And guess who's stuck in the middle with the blue peace-keeping helmet on? Yup, it's you.

Xenocracy is a pretender to *Privateer 2: The Darkening*'s (*PCZ* #44, 94%) throne; a vacuum-'em-up, if you will. Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to prevent full-scale war from breaking out. Funnily enough, this is accomplished by shooting the bejeebers out of anyone who steps out of line. As has become familiar with *P2:TD* and others, you loop around, locking onto targets, lasering and missiling all and sundry. You choose from several missions available at a given time, with an eye to balancing the economies and attitudes of the four empires. In between, you spend your R&D budget on researching new gizmos to give you an edge in battles to come.

The game looks nice, as we have come to expect in these times, especially under 3Dfx. It's due to be released on the PC and the PlayStation, and has the large, colourful schematics and buttons that characterise the latter. I suspect that flight control is a lot easier with a game pad, too; it is prone to oversteering with a joystick. And don't even think about using a mouse.

Xenocracy failed to grab. Flying around and zapping stuff is always fun, but there's nothing here that's not been done before, and most of it has been done better. Despite the complex and detailed background information, and the efforts at originality by offering a choice of missions, it all still comes down to straight dogfighting, which is a little basic in this day and age. Should you have worked your way through *Wing Commander* and the lovely *Freespace* (reviewed on page 102), you might want to give *Xenocracy* a look, but don't expect it to set your world on fire.

PCZVERDICT 72%

VANGERS

£39.99 • Interactive Magic • Out now

It's driving game. It's trading. It's collecting plegma? *Richie Shoemaker* investigates

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 16Mb **SUPPORTS** Windows sound card **WE SAY** With so much going on in the landscapes you'll need at least 32Mb RAM

"*Micro Machines* on acid" is how some in the office greeted *Vangers*, and on first inspection this isn't too far from the truth. Basically, *Vangers* is a driving game, but more than that it is a trading game. Sort of *Elite* meets *Micro Machines* (*PCZ* #13, 70%) – though still on acid. It is also supposed to be a search for truth, though really it's a search for what the hell's going on.

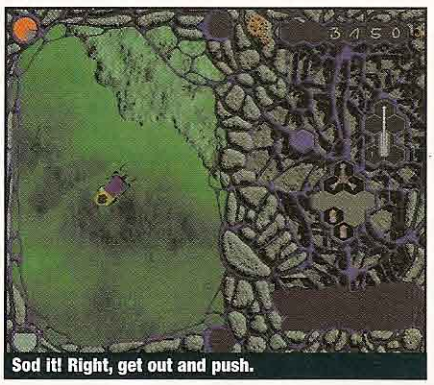
You start off in Podish, an underground escave on the planet Fostral. Leepky, who's the grub-king, so to speak, gives you a mission – to take some nymbos to Incubator (another escave). Once there you must bring back some plegma (don't ask). Completing missions gives you the finance to upgrade, but also furnishes you with greater social standing and access to more information and hopefully on to new planets. You don't have to complete the missions, you can just race around the surface shooting other vangers or collecting beeborats. But if you want to find out what's going on you'll need to get with the program.

Now that you understand the story (don't you?), on to the game itself. Well it's a mixed bag. Driving around the cluttered surface, it's difficult not to be impressed by the world the developers have created. Planets are rich with life, other vangers race around, and beeborats scuttle about waiting to be collected. The problem is that it's bloody hard to get to where you want to go. Invariably you get lost, stuck under water (or whatever it's called) or killed somewhere along the way. In a word, it's frustrating. Curiosity may drive you to buy the game, it may even compel you to complete it. Just don't expect to be addicted to it. *Vangers* is far too bizarre for it's own good and demands far too much of most people's time than most people should be prepared to give.

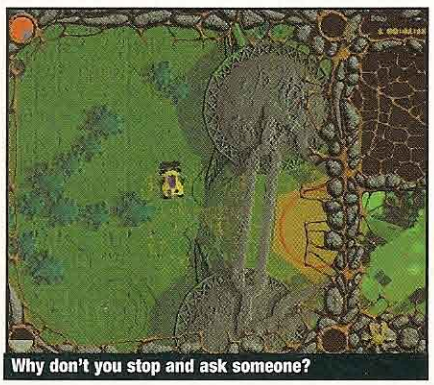
PCZ VERDICT 67%



Excuse me, can you tell me how to get to er... thingy?



Sod it! Right, get out and push.



Why don't you stop and ask someone?

NIGHTMARE CREATURES

£39.99 • Activision • Out now

London is under threat. Can *Simon Ingham* save it? Does he want to?

TECH SPECS

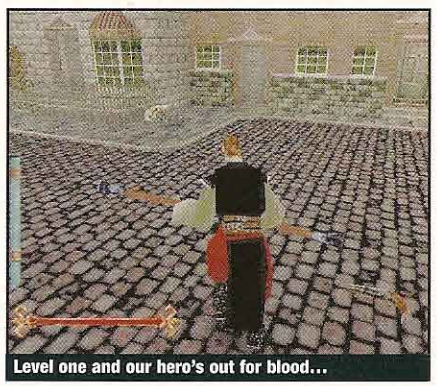
MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb **WE SAY** Direct3D-compatible graphics card highly recommended as well as 32Mb RAM

Although the title suggests gameplay of a somewhat sinister nature, this is actually an exploratory beat 'em up which gives you a choice between a male and female fighter, each with their own weapons and fighting styles. Journeying through the streets of London, your task is to search for a way to save the city from the dreaded Nightmare Creatures hinted at in the title. Along the way you need to activate hidden switches to open locked doors which block your escape from each level.

The large amount of gore and flying limbs that result from your lightning-fast combo moves can be addictive and strangely fulfilling. You can also obtain a vast range of weapons, which makes the destruction of creatures a little more interesting. There is no time limit to this game, but if you fail to keep killing things your character's adrenalin level drops and therefore renders you helpless against the virus which created the creatures. Graphically, *Nightmare Creatures* is quite impressive – the amount of detail in the scenery and the buildings is enough to impress an architect. The 3D roving camera angles are impressive too, if somewhat irritating. Trying to see what your character is doing is difficult at times, which as you can imagine is no recipe for fun-filled gameplay.

Unfortunately the game is let down by weak puzzles (assuming you consider searching a dark labyrinth for a switch to be a puzzle), and relentlessly killing one monster after the next loses its appeal after about the fourth level. To sum it up, there's nothing truly unique about this game. The graphics are impressive but the gameplay is repetitive and dull. If, however, you're in the market for a good looking slash 'em up that requires you to have the intellect of pond life then you could do a hell of a lot worse than *Nightmare Creatures*. Mind you, there's always *Deathtrap Dungeon* (*PCZ* #65, 70%).

PCZ VERDICT 60%



Level one and our hero's out for blood...



...which he soon finds.

MIGHT AND MAGIC VI

£34.99 • Ubi Soft • Out now

Time to dust off your pointy hat and go trick-or-treating with *Chris Anderson*

TECH SPECS

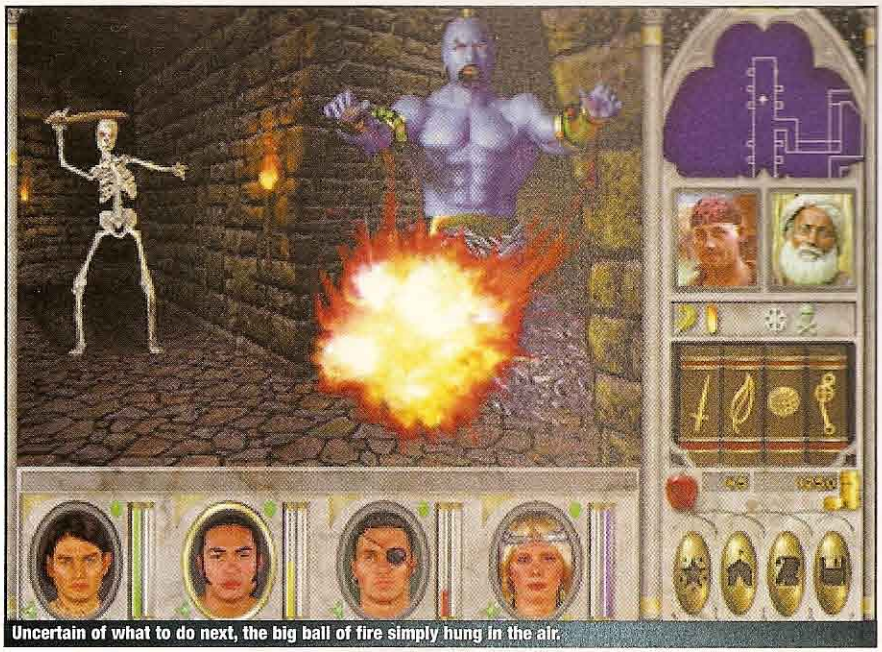
MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P90 **Memory** 6Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** SoundBlaster and compatibles **WE SAY** That sounds about right

In these heady days of 3D acceleration and graphical trickery, *Might and Magic VI* arrives to remind us how ugly games used to be. Sparse backgrounds and environments and badly animated sprites inhabit the dated and unimaginative world of *Might and Magic VI*. Rubbish, then, obviously. Well not quite – not if forced to spend a reasonable amount of time with it.

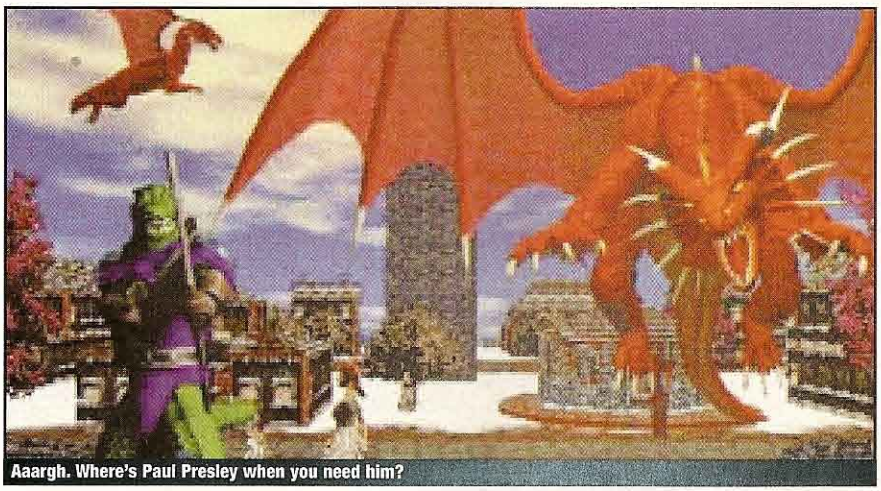
You start the game with a group of four adventurers who can be given their own character classes at random, or if you want to be really anal about it you can spend hours deciding what their attributes are and what colour pointy hat you think they should wear etc. This sort of behaviour is to be frowned upon, of course, and all sensible types will accept the default party allotted to them (and I can vouch that it makes very little difference whether you customise your party or not).

Gameplay consists of talking to people who give you quests, which you then complete in return for large wads of cash which in turn can be spent on buying new weapons and spells and stuff. If this sounds familiar, it's probably because this type of thing *is* familiar. *Might and Magic VI* offers nothing you won't find in a standard RPG, but at the same time, if you're willing to persevere with it (and you're prepared to live with the dodgy graphics), it will keep you busy for a reasonable period of time.

PCZ VERDICT **59%**



Uncertain of what to do next, the big ball of fire simply hung in the air.



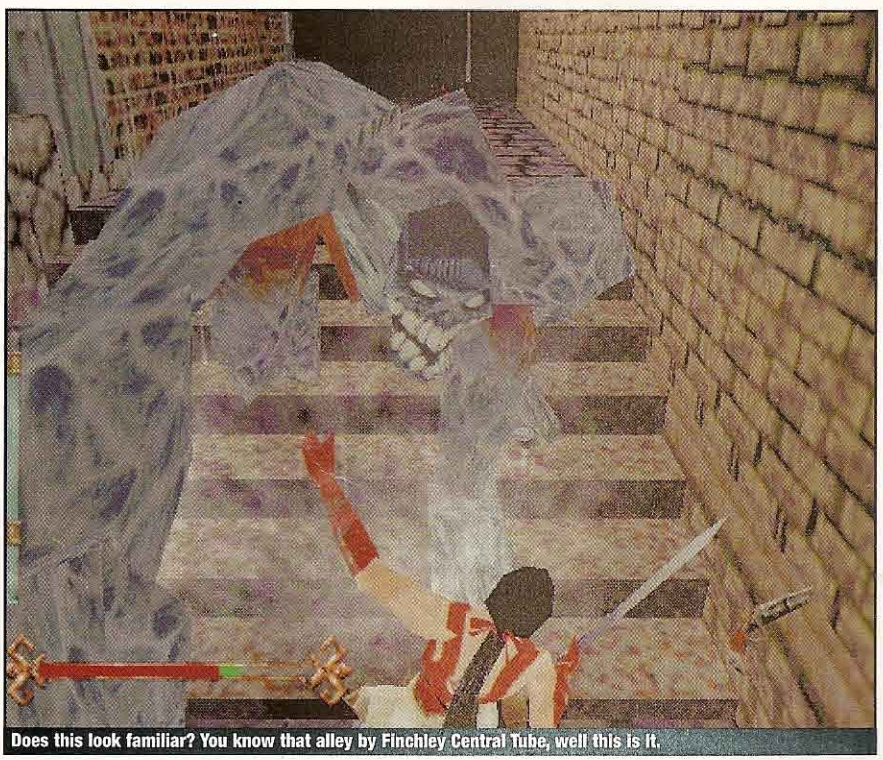
Aaargh. Where's Paul Presley when you need him?



Whoah, not bad for a girl.



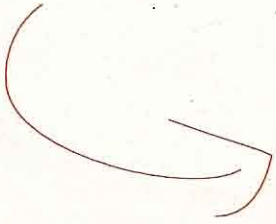
The only way to beat the hydra is to destroy the pillars.



Does this look familiar? You know that alley by Finchley Central Tube, well this is it.

Stay right there, sucker

Because now you can sample **and** buy all the latest games without getting out of bed.
Just get your plastic in one hand, and the other's free to grip your joystick...simple.

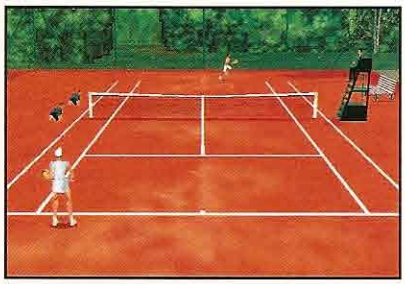


www.netgames.co.uk

THE CLUB FOR TRULY SAD COMPUTER GAME NERDS

GAME, NET & MATCH

£29.99 • Blue Byte



Not the best view for playing in – you can't even see the baseline.



It'll be graphics settings at their lowest for the non-3D card owners, then.



Of course you get to play at Wimbledon.

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Thank goodness tennis games come but once in a blue moon, or once a year. It's not that they're not welcome as such, it's just that choosing between them isn't difficult. Last year, *Pete Sampras Tennis* (*PCZ* #64, 88%) was the undisputed king of tennis games, though the only other contender was *Tennis Elbow* (*PCZ* #54, 72%). This year it looks as if *Game, Net & Match* will take the title, especially as it's probably the only new tennis game we'll see before Christmas.

Ah, but wait. The thing is, *Pete Sampras Tennis* is available on budget, for less than half the price of *GN&M*. And it has to be said that when it comes down to simple one-player gameplay there really is little to choose between the two.

Movement and shot control are remarkably similar and very intuitive, but when it comes to graphics *Game, Net & Match* utilises Direct3D and 3Dfx – *Sampras* doesn't (15-0). The thing is, if you don't have a 3D card, *GN&M* runs like a pig gorged on strawberries and cream. *Sampras* will run on everything but a sandwich toaster (15-15).

GN&M's graphics are hardly state of the art, and although its animation is pretty smooth, movement is hardly lifelike and the backgrounds are pretty bland as well. Mind you, it has to be said that tennis is hardly the most colourful of sports.

In terms of atmosphere, *Sampras* serves an ace. The sound in *GN&M* is pretty crappy, the so-called commentary is truly awful and the crowd don't build themselves up to the extent they do in *Sampras Tennis* (15-30). Where *GS&M* scores highly is in the wealth of options for single and multiplayer modes alike. You can set up your player to give them a strong serve at the expense of other factors such as strength, speed or forehand. Your player will even improve as you go through the lengthy season and compete in the wide range of tournaments.

Go online and *GS&M* really comes into its own. Unfortunately, the European server is full of Germans who can't type a word of English, and as a result you have to goad them into a game by insulting them. Once you're in, barring the odd crash and occasional lag problems, it's a bloody good crack (30-30, rain stops play).

So, which should you buy? If you're skint, not particularly interested in the online side of things and have a low-spec machine, buy *Pete Sampras Tennis*. Whereas if you want a tennis game with a wealth of customisable options, a superb multiplayer element and a mighty fine one-player component, go for *Game, Net & Match*.

Richie Shoemaker

PCZ VERDICT 80%

ARMY MEN

£39.99 • Ubi Soft



Your own unruly conscripts are your biggest headache.

Had *Army Men* been born into a world devoid of countless *C&C* clones, its concept would undoubtedly have appealed to all our inherent reminiscences of childhood glories. However, in their desire to be different, developers 3DO have ended up producing a cross between *Ikari Warriors* and *Cannon Fodder* (*PCZ* #14, 90%) – without the pace and the addictive qualities of either.

You control one man – Sarge. Your mission involves blowing up buildings or escorting a truck, and along the way you pick up bazookas, grenades and medi-kits. The best bit comes when you find a tank to climb into, or when you direct air strikes.

So far so good, until you have to direct a squad of inept conscripts: one always gets stuck behind a rock; they rarely attack the right target; and if you put 'em in a truck they'll run you over. You spend 20 minutes clearing a town of tanks and infantry, only to end up as road-kill at the hands of your own men – aarrgh!

The most annoying aspect of *Army Men* asserts itself about halfway through the first campaign. Namely, it's bloody hard – the clumsy control interface and the difficulties in using many of the weapons lead to many a premature death. Running around with a mortar allows you to see the enemy further off but once they catch sight of you, you have to switch to the underpowered rifle to kill them, by which time you're half dead. The aiming recticle is slightly off-centre as well, and hard to make out in the heat of battle. You can sidestep and lie prone but fiddling for the keys will only stop you shooting back and the enemy hits you regardless.

Although initially appealing, *Army Men* is so heavily flawed that any possible fun to be had is outweighed. It's a nice idea, but in following it through 3DO have messed their pants and left an unholy stink in the air.

Richie Shoemaker

PCZ VERDICT 41%

BURNOUT CHAMPIONSHIP DRAG RACING

£34.99 • Bethesda/Virgin



A tricky bit of straight tests both car and driver to the max.

You could be forgiven for wondering how on earth you make a game about drag racing. Accelerate… brake… game over. Unbelievable. To understand it you have to think of it less as a racer and more as a simulation, and remember there's only so much you can do with a quarter of a mile of straight track.

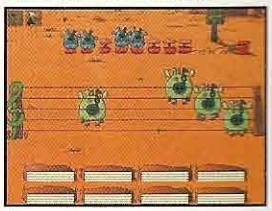
Great presentation, realism and 3Dfx-enhanced graphics can't hide the fact that this just isn't fun. It's all about adjusting nearly 100 different parameters on your car and monitoring the performance. Sounds too much like hard work? It is. Strictly for drag racing fanatics.

Roger Green

PCZ VERDICT 52%

CODEBREAKER

£29.99 • Marshall Media



In *Codebreaker*'s case, drab graphics belie absolutely nothing.

PC ZONE PANTS

Edutainment pretending to be a puzzle game. Hmmm. It's worked before, but 'for all the family' most frequently translates as 'mutual boredom'. We shall see.

Codebreaker is split into four worlds, each consisting of three levels. The game's creators seem to have decided that the best way to extend playing time is to put the difficulty level up to virtually insoluble at level two or three of each world, with the exception of Science World, which is bloody impossible from the word go.

In longevity terms, the game offers the opportunity to play slightly different variants of the same puzzles ad infinitum, although only a masochist would desire to do so. There's also a section on the *Codebreaker*

NHL POWERPLAY 98

£29.99 • VIE



The face-off. Can you feel the tension?

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Any ice hockey game is going to find it hard competing against EA Sports' stunning *NHL 98* (*PCZ* #57, 94%). *Actua Ice Hockey* couldn't really compete, but that didn't put Radical, creators of *Powerplay*, off. Compared to the stacks of cash EA throw into games development, these guys have done remarkably well to create a game that comes surprisingly close to taking EA's crown.

In many ways, *Powerplay* is perhaps too similar to EA's game. You've got the obligatory range of exhibition matches, through customisable seasons and play-offs. You've got motion-captured players from all the major teams, and you've even got some lovely presentation and a control method almost lifted straight from EA's game.

Graphically the animation is fluid and fast. It looks good if you've got a 3D card and remains impressive without. On the rink, the game runs on quite a pace, which can sometimes be a problem when play gets congested, though thankfully it's always obvious where the puck is.

There are loads of camera angles, of which only a couple are playable. However, even these do not detract from the fact that the rink is too small. This is the main gripe of the game, and at times is a real pain. The players seem huge in comparison with anything else, and play gets frantic. However, as with real ice hockey, goals are in abundance.

Frankly, if you're only going to buy one ice hockey game, get EA's. But if you're in the market for a second, *NHL Powerplay 98* won't disappoint. ***Paul Rowden***

PCZ VERDICT **82%**

website which purportedly offers additional puzzles to those who have completed the game.

The graphics are crisp, but barely animated and rather basic to say the least. The sound is decent, but nothing to write home about. The accompanying book on codes is evidently aimed at fairly young children, and isn't too bad bar the odd inaccuracy.

For its puzzle elements, *Codebreaker* relies on look-up charts, elimination (and not in a fun sort of bullets-flying-everywhere way, either), copy-cat repetition, and – failing all else – not giving you the slightest clue as to what the hell you're supposed to be doing.

As edutainment, which is what *Codebreaker* is, despite claims to puzzledom, it doesn't really make the mark either. It's hardly the sort of game that would hold anyone's interest for very long, let alone that of your average eight-year-old, and it hardly compares to such classics of the genre as Sierra's *Doctor Brain* series.

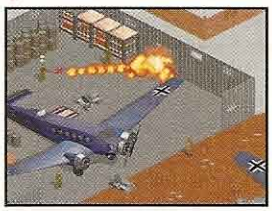
Codebreaker promises far more than it delivers, and doesn't stand up particularly well against almost *any* other games of its genre. It isn't very educational, and it certainly isn't entertaining.

Kat Necrochristi

PCZ VERDICT **37%**

DINK SMALLWOOD

£29.99 • RT Soft



Nice sense of humour; shame about... the rest of the game.

PC ZONE PANTS

I had a slight feeling of déjà vu while playing this game. This is probably because I've played it before, albeit some ten years ago. Simply replace the 'D' in Dink with an 'L' and you have the main character from the SNES classic *Zelda*, and indeed the comparison between the two games is evident as much in terms of gameplay as game titles. In similar fashion to *Zelda* (or *Diablo* if you want a more modern comparison), you control a would-be warrior across a vast fantasy landscape. You are given a sword and some magical powers to assist you in your efforts to rid the world of the kind of evil goings-on that always seem to plague games like this.

Graphically, *Dink* is nothing to write home about, and it's no great shakes in terms of gameplay, either. I challenge anyone to play *Dink* for more than a few hours without getting completely bored. Worse still are the many graphical glitches you'll come across. At one point I got completely stuck in the landscape for no apparent reason.

Dink's one saving grace is its humour, which can often be entertaining, although not entertaining enough to make you want to put up with the game's many problems. Avoid.

Simon Ingham

PCZ VERDICT **30%**

HEXPLORE

£29.99 • Ocean



Behind *Hexplore*'s silly name and dull graphics lurks a surprisingly playable RPG.

What a bloody ridiculous name for a game. It conjures up visions of spotty 14-year-olds with NHS specs going about calling themselves Llothq'ar the Mighty, Lord of the Forestlands and Holder of the 1998 Award for Pointy Earedness.

Having stopped giggling at the inanity of the title, and actually got round to loading the damn thing, the first thing you notice are the graphics, which rather fail to impress, being, as they are, about four years out of date. The music is atmospheric and *Hexplore* sports full speech, although the sound quality of some of the narration is a little dubious in places, and we're *positive* that you didn't get rednecks in Carpathia circa the year 1000.

Once you get past the more superficial details and into the serious business of adventuring, *Hexplore* becomes rather more involving. The combat system comes to life once you gather your party, having a distinct strategic element. The storyline is deep enough to make you want to continue onwards, despite involving the standard 'kill Foozle' plot device, and the game is challenging enough to make it all worthwhile.

In gameplay terms, *Hexplore* falls into the hack 'n' slash area of things, with NPC interaction consisting mainly of occasional comments. And while you can't kill the friendly NPCs, you can kill all their chickens. Imagine the headlines: "Ritual Chicken Sacrifice In Computer Game – Church of Satan Denies Involvement." But I digress...

In look and gameplay, *Hexplore* is rather reminiscent of the classic *Dark Sun: Shattered Lands* (*PCZ* #9, 83%). If you're exclusively a fan of RPGs based around NPC interaction, then you're out of luck. However, if you can appreciate a good bit of top-down RPG action of the blasting-your-foes-to-oblivion-with-fireballs variety, then *Hexplore* is the game for you – although you might not want your friends to see you coming out of the shop with it.

Kat Necrochristi

PCZ VERDICT **74%**

MUZZLE VELOCITY

£19.99 • ZABLAC Entertainment



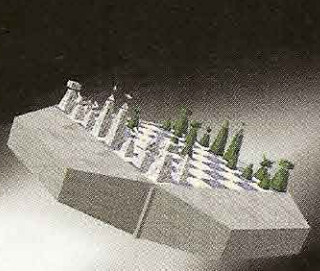
Alright, so it's not *Quake*, but it's okay.

First impressions are not great. The installation and set-up routines are appallingly outdated and you're left in no doubt that this is a DOS game sitting uncomfortably in Windows. But work your way through the clunky interface and invest hours in the tutorial levels, and the game slowly emerges – and it's surprisingly playable.

Your average WWII sim can feel less like one of the greatest conflicts of our time and more like a game of draughts. *Muzzle Velocity* builds on the standard point/click/command interface by using 3D graphics to create a feeling that you really are at war.

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SOLDIERS AT WAR

£29.99 • SSI/Mindscape



Turn-based strategists and WWII enthusiasts will love *Soldiers At War* – despite its uninspiring graphics.

PCZONE RECOMMENDED

SSI have gone back to what they do best – turn-based strategy. For once though, it isn't hexes but tiles. Set in World War II, you play the Americans, single-handedly winning the war (if Hollywood is to be believed). You command a squad of eight, and control every move in a battle system very similar to *X-COM*.

Although graphically uninspiring, and at a tempo that would make a glacier seem fast, *Soldiers At War* will have turn-based fans glued to their PCs for hours.

Real-time aficionados would be better off going for *Commandos* (see page 96), but if you want unlimited time between your turns this is the one to go for, especially if you want that WWII kick. ***Dan Emery***

PCZVERDICT 82%

Most of your units allow you to take control in 3D and drive them about, adding a welcome element of action into what is otherwise a bland strategy game. It's all too tempting to jump into your biggest tank and drive around conducting your own personal war, which is really not the idea. This is about tactics and while you're cruising about blowing up clock towers and mowing down civilians, the rest of the war is being fought – and probably lost.

There's no 3Dfx support and the graphics aren't the best you'll ever see, but they do fulfil their purpose of dragging you down into the battle from the usual sterile map view. The game also overcomes the familiar problem of poor AI that leaves you screaming: "No! Stop pirouetting about and shoot the bloody enemy, you crappy bloody tank!" If one of your tanks misbehaves you can simply get into the driving seat and shoot the enemy yourself.

If you're not into war sims then I doubt this game will change your mind. However, if you fancy setting the record straight on all the major battles of the Western Front, with a blend of historical accuracy and full-on action, you could do worse for your 20 quid. *Roger Green*

PCZVERDICT 70%

PROJECT ARIOS

£34.99 • Infogrames



The strategic planning screen – red marks the enemy.

Jaded as we all are with RTS games, *Project Arios* does add a twist or two to the genre. You play a suit working for a mercenary corporation, hiring out your hardware to the highest bidder and becoming filthy rich.

The game is played at three levels. The first is your executive pad, where you decide which missions to undertake, research new technologies and dabble on the stock exchange. The latter feels somewhat tacked on, but eventually becomes a useful way of gaining extra capital – and that's what the game's all about.

The design screen is much better. There you add components to chassis in order to (hopefully) produce the ultimate military vehicle. As you research, more weapons, armour and other stuff become available – this part is fun, as you try to squeeze as many guns into your tanks as possible without sacrificing armour or speed.

Then there's the large-scale map, where you set up an HQ and send out forces across country. You can also airlift extra men and vehicles into battles when needed. Once your soldiers have met the enemy, the game switches to a familiar *C&C*-style screen.

Unfortunately, it's here that *Project Arios* falls flat. The mouse control is primitive, and your units trundle lifelessly across the landscape and take dismal pot-shots at each other, suffering terribly from 'aimless wander'. It's a bit of a letdown after the earlier stuff; while designing new tanks is nice, it's a shame they all turn out as uninspiring olive-coloured sprites.

Project Arios makes a brave attempt to put a new spin on the genre, but suffers in the final analysis. It will suit hardened strategy-heads more than it will lovers of *Red Alert* (*PCZ* #47, 94%) or *Total Annihilation* (*PCZ* #56, 92%), but in the end even they will probably come away feeling unsatisfied. *Adam Taylor*

PCZVERDICT 66%

THE 3RD MILLENNIUM

£29.99 • Cryo



Control freaks will excel at *The 3rd Millennium...*

PCZONE PANTS

Did you ever, while playing *SimCity,* plonk down a couple of lengths of railroad and say to yourself: "Hey, I wish I could select whether I want narrow or wide gauge, or choose the type of wood I want to use for the sleepers"?

You did? Well, luckily for the rest of us, most games designers don't make their games for the likes of you. However, if you really, really want this kind of no-holds-barred, let's-simulate-everything gameplay, there's at least one developer out there for you – a French company called Cryo.

Their new game, *The 3rd Millennium*, is something like a cross between *SimCity* (*PCZ* #20, 90%) and *Civilization* (*PCZ* #32, 90%), only 50 times more complicated and a hundred times less appealing. Describing itself as "visionary, merciless and provocative", the game tries to simulate every aspect of economics, environment and society in the next millennium, from birth control and pollution to uranium mining and treaties of economic union.

You play the leader of one of 30-odd world states and do exciting things like censor the press, ban immigration and enforce religious fasting, as well as research all kinds of futuristic guff from bionic prostheses to anti-violence therapy. After you've created your model society – and kept it in credit, naturally – you then try and conquer the world by getting yourself elected in every government on the planet.

It's hard to say whether this makes for realistic gameplay, because who knows whether enforcing birth control on 300 million citizens would increase or decrease the average wage of an agricultural worker (apart from the ones on rubber plantations, of course). If you do happen to know the answer to this all-important question, you'll excel at *The 3rd Millennium* – especially if you can stick with it past the first few years.

While this game is undeniably clever and surprisingly atmospheric in terms of music and sound, it's about as exciting and as intense as paper tiddlywinks. Yawning's a lot more fun... *Andrew Wright*

PCZVERDICT 30%

WRECKIN' CREW

£34.99 • Telstar Electronic Studios



Fast cartoon graphics and arcade action. Not bad.

Unlikely to be mistaken for *F1 97*, *Wreckin' Crew* is an upbeat, cartoon-style racing game clearly influenced by the likes of *Mario Kart*. Don't expect realism or originality – this is 'remove brain before use' stuff which, when you've had all the *F1 97* you can take, is very appealing.

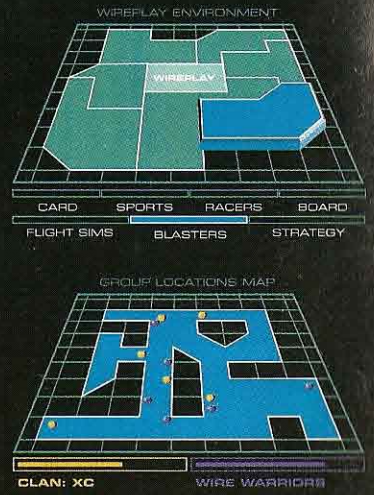
The tracks are stylish, packed with detail, and feature the usual power-ups and 'secret' bits. The game plays well and feels solid and responsive throughout. On the downside, it only achieves the speed it needs in low-res, even on quite a fast PC, and there's no 3Dfx support as yet. *Roger Green*

PCZVERDICT 77%

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BUDGETZONE

At least this month we can blame the state of our wallets on the World Cup.

No new games this month then, never mind – there's always a cheaper substitute

REVIEWED BY Richie Shoemaker

JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER

£12.99 • Eidos Premier Collection • Reviewed *PCZ* #5

PCZONE RECOMMENDED

Now here's a turn-up for the books: a flight sim that's barely six months old, available at a budget price, and scoring a more-than-respectable 90% back in our Christmas issue.

Obviously, *Joint Strike Fighter* couldn't have sold all that well, which can be put down to the subsequent arrival of DID's *F22 ADF* (*PCZ* #60, 93%). Next to *F22*, *JSF* did lack that certain finesse and attention to detail necessary to keep it at the top. On budget though, *JSF* can once again rule the skies, safe in the knowledge that it's going to be a while before anything comes along to challenge it – at least at this price.

When it comes to graphics, *JSF* is superb, and with a 3Dfx card it looks awesome. The aesthetically appealing planes fly with a fluid grace, running quite nicely thank-you on a P133; though to turn up all the options you'll need 32Mb of RAM. The landscapes are equally wonderful, and the detailed living cities and vehicles give the game a charm that almost makes you feel ashamed to blow them away. It's a shame that some of the combat seems lacking in the full-on simulation treatment, even though the game is obviously aimed at full-on sim fans. There's still a lack of detail in some areas – no tutorials and some bizarre AI flaws – but at this price it's hard to knock the game.



JSF: six months old, and already gracing the bargain bins.

PCZVERDICT 86%

> ***JSF* can rule the skies, safe in the knowledge that at this price, no sim will come near it**



BEASTS & BUMPKINS

£9.99 • EA Classics • Reviewed *PCZ* #55

On its first release, this game was seen less as a *C&C* beater than as a mildly amusing diversion. Which is exactly what it still is. Added to the real-time stew is a fantasy *Carry On*-style world replete with busty young maidens and wolf whistles. The humour won't be to everyone's taste; in fact, if *Carry On* leaves you cold then you can stop reading right now.

Instead of progressing through an eternity of building and fighting, you have to worry about the coming seasons, and both harvesting your crops and sowing your human seed. Young farmers grow old and become a burden, and small children need nurturing before they can pull their weight. This element may sound complex, but it's all done with the minimum of fuss, thanks to a very workable interface and a gradually unfolding mission structure.

Where the game may lose another flock of fans is due to its light-handed combat. You won't see any large-scale wars, rather small skirmishes between a few soldiers and man-eating wasps.

Beasts & Bumpkins does include a little exploration to make up for it, but if you want massive pitched battles you might be better off opting for *WarCraft 2* (*PCZ* #47, 70%).

PCZVERDICT 70%



BENEATH A STEEL SKY

£4.99 • Sold Out • Reviewed *PCZ* #18

Not exactly hard-core, this one. *Beneath A Steel Sky* is a fairly shallow point-and-click adventure that takes in elements of Orwellian big-brother paranoia and mixes in humour that is almost funny – but not quite.

The aim is basically to find out how you came to be where you are, and defeat the corrupt city authorities. The pace of the game can hardly be termed exciting, and this isn't helped by being a little bit too easy for most players. Say the right thing or use the right object, and progress can be quick without too much thought. It's okay while it lasts, but there's better stuff if you're willing to shell out a couple more quid.

PCZVERDICT 59%



CANNON FODDER

£4.99 • Sold Out • Reviewed *PCZ* #14

Yes, graphics actually used to be this bad – just like the 3Dfx beauties of today will look like mud wiped from a child's face in a year's time. *Cannon Fodder* was one of the most addictive games of its day, a blood-soaked action game where you mouse-clicked a squad of men around a VGA battlefield, shooting and blowing up everything in sight. Once you get through the first couple of missions without casualties, your soldiers start to pick up in rank, and therefore shoot further and with greater accuracy. Of course, you'll lose a good few men along the way, but back home there are conscripts aplenty waiting to lay down their digital lives. Reach the later levels and you get to drive Jeeps, tanks and choppers.

Once you've got over the graphics, you realise that the gameplay underneath is ageless. The level design and the speed of *Cannon Fodder* make an explosive and addictive mix that makes the game hard to put down and easy to forgive. Five years old and priced at just five quid, this represents far better value than *Army Men*. A word of warning though: setting up the game to run in Windows 95 can be a bit of a pain. You may have to do a bit of homework on the memory management front, but it's well worth the extra effort.

PCZVERDICT 79%



THE DIG & FULL THROTTLE

£14.99 • Virgin White Label • Reviewed *PCZ* #34 & #27 resp

Ah, another LucasArts double pack, this one containing two of their more adventurous point-and-clickers – the Spielberg 'inspired' *Dig* and the hilarious *Full Throttle*.

Starting off with *The Dig*, we have a present-day sci-fi drama where a mysterious asteroid appears at the edge of the solar system, threatening a collision with Earth. In an attempt to divert disaster, you, as Boston Low, are sent to place charges on its craterous surface. With a crew in quiet dissent, you very soon discover the asteroid is not all it first appears – oh no, there be aliens involved!

Compared with LucasArts' other efforts, *The Dig* is disappointing. In tackling human issues, the game ends up like a tacky TV movie. It's a good story though, well-scripted and with some interesting characters.

Full Throttle is a little different. LucasArts went back to some full-on cartoon fun for this one. You are Ben, a burly biker with a mission – to find your gang and stop their advance into certain death. The adventure itself is simple and can be completed in a couple of days, but it's a hell of a lot of fun all the same. More importantly though, it comes complete with more than its fair share of laughs.

Both games come with graphics of the VGA variety, though *Full Throttle*'s are bigger and better. Neither game is LucasArts' best, but both are sufficiently different from one another to justify the price.

PCZVERDICT 77%



IRON ASSAULT

£4.99 • Sold Out • Reviewed *PCZ* #25

PC ZONE PANTS

Ooh, goody… a *Mech*-style game for a fiver. Oooh no, my mistake, it's a twisted metal scrap heap. If you were one of those people who bought this game when it first came out, now is the time to relive the nightmare. It wasn't worth 30 quid three years ago, and the passing of time has not been kind. Everything about this game is wrong.

Wrong #1: it was conceived as a cash-in on the *Mechwarrior* genre. Wrong #2: the graphics are dreadful, badly animated and dull. Wrong #3: the gameplay stinks – all the units feel the same and move too slowly. Finally, wrong #4: the sound is pathetically limp.

The good thing is it's now only a fiver. The bad thing is that so is an ironing board cover. We wouldn't like to choose between the two – you shouldn't have to.

PCZ VERDICT 25%





REBEL ASSAULT & REBEL ASSAULT II

£14.99 • Virgin White Label • Reviewed *PCZ* #11 & #34 resp

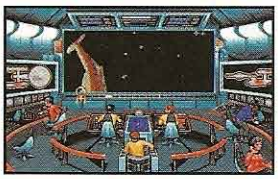
When they first appeared, both *Rebel Assault* games made people sit up and take notice. The first game probably helped shift as many CD-ROM drives as the first *Megarace* game. It was pure *Star Wars* nostalgia, with grainy FMV from the films, and tons of dodgy animation. Unfortunately, there was little else.

The gameplay shifts between simple flying and shooting exercises and isn't much fun at all. The graphics are looking severely dated, and the gameplay wouldn't have been out of place in a 1980s arcade.

The second game is better, though it's really just more of the same. New footage was shot and it looks good. The storyline is pure *Star Wars* hokum, and at every chapter you have to shoot guards *Virtua Cop*-style or fly a ship through tunnels. It's mindless fun – consider it an interactive movie in the truest sense.

How games have changed. Ten years ago, the first-person shoot 'em up was characterised by games like *Operation Wolf* – now it's *Quake*. The *Rebel Assault* games have a place in time, and that time has passed. You really have to be a very forgiving *Star Wars* fan to get any long-term enjoyment from this collection.

PCZ VERDICT 45%



STAR TREK: 25TH ANNIVERSARY & JUDGEMENT RITES

£14.99 • Virgin White Label Reviewed *PCZ* #13 & #38

The *Star Trek* universe is rich and diverse, and both these adventures reflect the ground-breaking 1960s series admirably. Suitably bizarre, the adventuring can be hard going at times, but unlike *A Final Unity*, the graphics and sound conspire to drag both games into the lower league of point-and-click gaming.

Now five years old, both games look and feel dated beyond their years. The animation is dodgy and the characters move through the screens a bit too slowly. Consequently, it becomes annoying when searching for that elusive item when you have to walk the crew across five screens. None of this is helped by a pedestrian control interface. Mind you, the speech is very good – McCoy and Spock both exchange sniping banter and the entire cast speak with youthful enthusiasm – but the ageing voices of Shatner, Nimoy et al seem at odds with the youthful sprites of the crew.

All this may seem trite to *Trek* fans who, understandably, will get a lot more out of the games than the rest of us. But in the world of adventuring, LucasArts reign supreme. If you want a budget *Star Trek* adventure, get *A Final Unity*. But if you want to dip your toes in the genre, go elsewhere.

PCZ VERDICT 61%





SHADOW WARRIOR

£12.99 • Eidos Premier Collection • Reviewed *PCZ* #56

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

When it comes to multiplayer gaming, online or otherwise, the 3D blasting fraternity still falls into one of two camps: *Quake* and *Duke Nukem 3D*. The *Quake II* versus *Jedi* debate may be taking over, and maybe *Unreal*, *SiN* et al may change things in the future, but in our humble opinion *Shadow Warrior* deserves a place in the argument.

Unfortunately, due to the thunder stolen by *Duke* and the out-of-dateness of 3D Realms' Build engine, the two sprite-based shooters, both this and *Blood*, have been left behind. Unfairly, because both are better than the ageing *Duke*.

Multiplayer-wise, *Shadow Warrior* is the better of the three. The awesome range of weapons and the crazed laughter of Lo Wang put multiplayer mayhem on an equal par with the original *Quake*. Upgrade the rocket launcher to propel a nuke and you'll be cracking your knuckles with glee at the melting carnage that ensues. Unfortunately, though, there aren't too many calls for a Wangbang, and low-spec multiplayers seem content to stick with *Duke*. Which is a shame.

Taking the argument down to the single-player level, *Shadow Warrior* is still a valid waste of game time. Yes, the graphics might look like tomato soup next to the gazpacho of current titles, but the blood flows more freely than anything else, and both the level design and the range of weapons are up there with the best of them.

It's a simple choice, then: if you're a fan of the genre, *Shadow Warrior* is a must – if you don't mind blocky sprites marring your vision. But if you're waiting for the next big thing, then put your money towards that instead.

PCZ VERDICT 80%

X-WING & TIE FIGHTER COLLECTION

£14.99 • Virgin White Label • Reviewed *PCZ* #2 & #18 resp

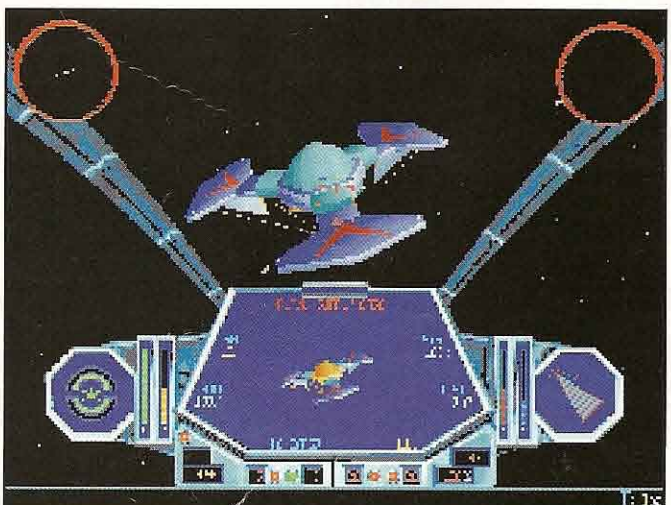
PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

There's something unalterably 'right' about *TIE Fighter* (and *X-Wing* to a certain extent) that seemed to have been lost in the more recent *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter* (*PCZ* #52, 89%). You could put that down to the lack of single-player support in *X Vs TIE*, but for many the control and movement of both of LucasArts' first space sims have greater fluidity than the hybrid sequel. Of course, on today's machines, the latter of the series plays much better, although you do have to invest in the mission pack *Balance Of Power* if you want to get the most out of it.

What this is leading to is a question of value. For a mere 15 quid you get two of the best space fighter games ever released, complete with all the mission packs that garnished the original experience. That's more than 150 missions in all, with access to every ship from the spindly Y-Wing to the advanced TIE Interceptor. Of the two games, *TIE* is better – the missions are more varied and there is some semblance of a plot with access to a secret guild of elite Imperial pilots. It's always more fun throwing your chips in with the bad guys.

"For a mere 15 quid you get two of the best space fighter games ever released, complete with all mission packs"

There's plenty here for first-timers, and although the graphics are understandably blocky in comparison to the 3Dfx-ed sequel, there should be nothing to dissuade you from the fact that until *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter* (plus expansion pack) arrives on budget, there's nothing to touch this collection for value. Forgive the graphics, just live the game.



The graphics may be blocky, but this collection is still untouchable for value.

PCZ VERDICT 83%

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Personal Computer World Editors Choice

"We judged the PCs in this month's group test on three main criteria: performance, price and internet readiness...There is usually quite a bit of hand-wringing over our Editor's Choice award, but not this month. Sheer value for money, performance and a no-strings internet access trial means that this month's winner just had to be the Dan Xplora Plus/166XT. It is well built, well specified and is one of the few machines to be truly internet ready. Superb."
PCW, **Editor's Choice** *(dan Xplora Plus/166XT), Sept'97*

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A NEED FOR

IN THE LABS Warren Chrismas

CD-ROM drives are getting faster and faster, but is it really worth keeping up with the pace?

Computer technology, as we all know, has a habit of advancing at an incredible pace. But who would have predicted the dramatic rise of the CD-ROM drive? Just five years ago a CD-ROM drive was very much an expensive and not exactly essential peripheral. These days, so important is the disc medium that you'd be hard pushed to find a PC sold without a drive, while performance levels have steadily risen from single-speed (where the drive spins the disc at the same rate as an audio player and is capable of transferring just 150k a second), right up to 40-speed drives which, in theory at least, can deliver a whopping 5.85Mb/s. They're also cheaper and easier to install (thanks to universal ATAPI drivers under Win95), than ever before.

But is it worth keeping up with advancements, especially as no game on the market actually requires anything greater than a quad-speed? That's what we're here to find out.

We've looked at seven CD-ROM drives you're likely to find in mail order ads and at your local hardware emporium. Drives from big-name and lesser known manufacturers ranging from an eight-speed (the likes of which some of you may still have in your PC) right up to a cutting-edge 40-speed drive which has only just hit the market. Most are cheap drives using a standard IDE interface (by far the most common), but we've also thrown in a more expensive, SCSI interfaced unit for comparison.

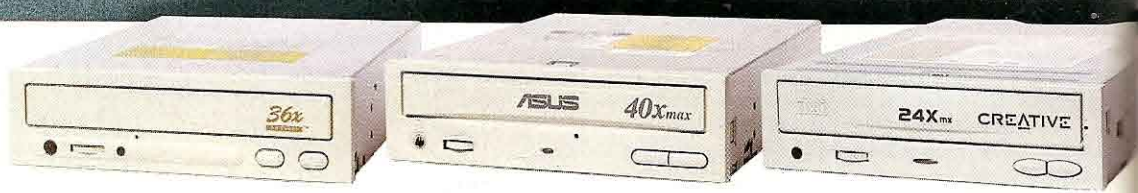
BUT FIRST...

Ever wondered how a CD-ROM drive works? We haven't. It's worth knowing, however, that the speed increases in modern drives have come through the use of full or partial constant angular velocity (CAV) technology which has replaced the constant linear velocity (CLV) system used in older drives (up to and including 12-speeds).

Unlike the original CLV units, CAV drives don't accelerate and decelerate the drive's motor to ensure a uniform data transfer rate across the disc – they spin them at a constant high speed. This delivers maximum transfer rates from the outside of the disc, but lower rates from the inside. When manufacturers refer to a drive being capable of, say, 32-speed (4.7Mb/s), they are – quelle surprise – actually referring to the *maximum* delivery rate of the drive and not an overall average.

Also worth keeping in mind is that, due to fast rotation speeds, fast drives can be very noisy. Thankfully, most manufacturers have worked on systems to minimise vibration but even so, whining and clanking from the drive can be a major annoyance.

"Performance levels have steadily risen from single-speed right up to 40-speed drives"



AOPEN CD-936E

£58 • Compusys • 01296 505101 • www.compusys.co.uk

The CD-936E may be a plain-looking, no-frills drive, but it's pleasingly quiet and stable (thanks to a system called Dynamic Damping), reasonably well-made and, perhaps most importantly of all, cheap for a 36-speed drive. Although the measured data transfer rate wasn't bad, our tests produced somewhat mixed results. Nevertheless, we still wouldn't discount it. A 40-speed version should be available from Compusys soon for around £80.

Specs: *36-speed, IDE interface*
Test results: *DTR 2114.5kb/s AAT 103.6ms BRIT 146s BRFC 444s*

PCZ VERDICT 84%

ASUS CD-S400

£69 • Panrix • 01132 444958 • www.panrix.co.uk

Here it is – the ASUS CD-S400 is the first 40-speed CD-ROM drive to hit British streets. Although our PC didn't take off (as we half expected), the drive was nonetheless very noisy in tests in a clanky, shaky kind of way. Performance-wise it came top of the IDE drives in the access time and data transfer rate benchmarks and the real-world tests (albeit only just). A sure-fire winner for speed then, but bring your own ear plugs.

Specs: *40-speed, IDE interface*
Test results: *DTR 2224.8kb/s AAT 72.5ms BRIT 133s BRFC 403s*

PCZ VERDICT 87%

CREATIVE BLASTER 24X

£69 • Simply Computers • 0181 523 4020 • www.simply.co.uk

Creative Lab's quickest drive is a mere 24-speed but the Creative Blaster 24X does at least appear to live up to its modest specifications. Indeed in our real-world tests it was up there with the fastest reviewed. Also, unlike many of the other drives, it looks well made. And, hey, it even comes bundled with a copy of *Actua Soccer*. The snag? Well it's quite whiney in operation and you undoubtedly pay a bit of a premium for the name.

Specs: *24-speed, IDE interface*
Test results: *DTR 1702.1kb/s AAT 96.1ms BRIT 140s BRFC 404s*

PCZ VERDICT 83%

SPEED?

DVD AND ALL THAT

This is the last round-up of CD-ROM drives you'll see in *PC Zone*. Why? Because the DVD-ROM invasion will soon be upon us. You can already pick-up standalone drives (without an MPEG-2 decoding card which enhances movies), for little more than £100. These are, of course, backwardly compatible with CD-ROMs.

But if you're struggling with an ancient CD-ROM drive and desperately need something faster, don't get too distracted by the DVD issue right now. DVD-ROMs, capable of storing the equivalent of around seven CD-ROMs, are undoubtedly the format of the future but by time there's a real reason to own a drive – and we're probably looking well into next year before we see a true killer app that makes proper use of the technology – they'll be way, way cheaper. And, just as importantly, *faster* than the first generation of drives currently available. Computer hardware – it's brilliant isn't it? PCZ

ON THE BENCH

How the tests were run

To benchmark each drive's data transfer rate (shown by DTR, where a high figure shows better performance) and average access time (AAT, lower is better), we used Touchstone's *WinCheckIt 4.0*.

For real-world tests we timed a minimal, 177Mb installation of *Blade Runner* (see BRIT) and then copied the entire 591Mb of the game's disc one – a total of 456 files ranging from 1k to 189Mb – directly to hard disk (see BRFC). Keep in mind that all these figures are strictly for comparative uses only. The latter figures in particular were wholly dependant on the configuration of our test PC.

Incidentally, in one sense these were *all* real-world tests. We didn't use a specially configured, top-of-the-range PC in labs to test the drives, but a 'typical' 166MHz Pentium with 32Mb RAM running the original version of Win95 and its native ATAPI CD-ROM drivers. In other words, the kind of PC specification you might have at home. Or below it, probably.

It's worth pointing out, however, that our test machine did not support something called Ultra DMA, which can significantly speed-up modern (compatible) drives. If you bought your PC in the last six months or so and your motherboard has an Intel TX/LX chipset, it probably does (check your manual for details). Then again, if you bought your PC in the last six months you're probably not looking for a new CD-ROM drive...

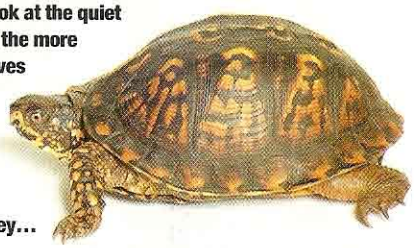
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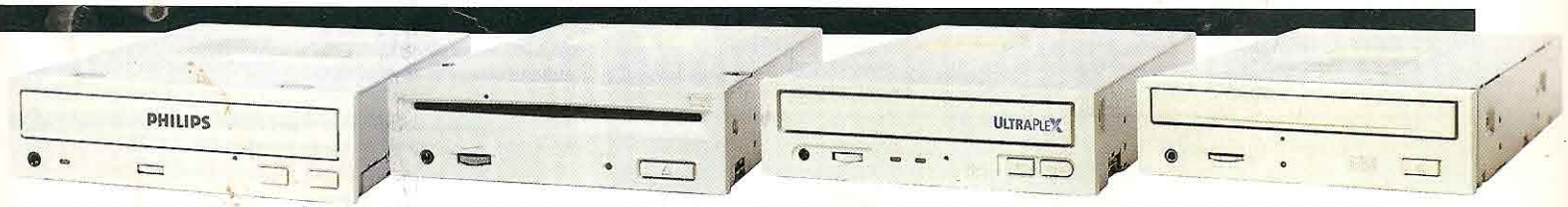
How the drives compare

There are lies, damn lies and benchmarks – someone might have said. Our benchmark figures were so perplexing in places that we went back and tested all the drives for a second time... only to come-up with similar results. The single most important factor that we're happy to confirm, however – as borne out by the benchmark *and* the real-world tests – is that there really isn't much to choose between the top models. We're talking 10 percent between them basically. The underlying story then – perhaps not surprisingly – is that if you have, say, a 24-speed model then it simply isn't worth upgrading to anything faster. Our advice? Wait for DVD-ROM to take-off instead.

If, however, you have, say, an 8- or 12-speed model (or God forbid, something slower), then you definitely have got something to gain. But which do you go for? Well if you've got a SCSI interface (and money to burn) then you should obviously be looking in the direction of the excellent Plextor drive – undoubtedly one of the best drives of its type on the market.

Unfortunately, there's no single perfect answer for those wanting an IDE drive – none of the drives are fast, cheap *and* quiet which is why none have scored over 90 percent. Ultimately you need to decide which criteria is most important to you. If you don't mind excessive noise, the Asus CD-S400 (for sheer speed) and Philips 32-Max (for value) are both definitely worth a look. If noise is an issue, then take a look at the quiet Aopen unit or the more expensive drives from the big-names, Creative and Pioneer. As they say, you pays yer money...





PHILIPS 32-MAX

£46 • Simply Computers • 0181 523 4020 • www.simply.co.uk

Our tests produced more irregularities with the Philips 32-Max turning in excellent benchmark figures (including the second fastest data transfer rate), a good *Blade Runner* install time but a very poor file copy rate. Why? We haven't got a clue. However, it was one of the noisiest CD-ROM drives on test but given the generally good performance and the low price it's definitely a major contender for a value-for-money award.

Specs: *32-speed, IDE interface;*
Test results: *DTR 2221.4kb/s AAT 82.8ms BRIT 134s BRFC 513s*

PCZ VERDICT 86%

PIONEER DR-504S

£69 • Simply Computers • 0181 523 4020 • www.simply.co.uk

Available in SCSI and IDE flavours (we tested the latter), this quiet 32-speed Pioneer drive differs from most on the market in that it has a front disc loading slot rather than a slide-out tray. Not that it makes a great deal of difference. Although its data transfer benchmark was inexplicably poor, the other results were very good. Like the Creative drive you pay a premium for the name, but it looks a good buy nonetheless.

Specs: *32-speed, IDE interface*
Test results: *DTR 1527kb/s AAT 81.6ms BRIT 141s BRFC 405s*

PCZ VERDICT 85%

PLEXTOR PX-32TSI

£108 • Simply Computers • 0181 523 4020 • www.simply.co.uk

Plextor's highly-rated UltraSCSI-based model is available as an external or internal unit and with a caddy or slide-out tray disc mechanism (we tested the latter in both cases). Again, the benchmark results weren't great but even with a *standard* (ie slow) SCSI controller in our test machine, it blew away the IDE opposition in the real-world tests. This is highly recommended if you have a SCSI card and can afford that little bit extra.

Specs: *32-speed, SCSI interface;*
Test results: *DTR 2194.6kb/s AAT 105ms BRIT 97s BRFC 323s*

PCZ VERDICT 90%

SIMPLY 8-SPEED

£32 • Simply Computers • 0181 523 4020 • www.simply.co.uk

For comparative purposes, Simply Computers dug us out an old 8-speed drive (actually an unbadged Mitsumi unit) – the kind of drive you're likely to find in the bargain bins of your local hardware store or, if you're really unlucky, installed inside your ageing PC. The poor test results speak for themselves, so why bother when something like the Philips drive only costs a few quid more? There are four left in stock apparently...

Specs: *8-speed, IDE interface*
Test results: *DTR 1204.8kb/s AAT 168.3ms BRIT 203s BRFC 571s*

PCZ VERDICT 42%

FEEDBACK

Is it grating, or great? Boring, or brilliant? Turgid, or terrific? We step aside to let you, the punter, voice your views on the games *PC Zone* has reviewed. *Adam Phillips* rifles through the postbag

IT'S YOUR SHOUT!

Feedback is here to offer you, the player, a platform to voice your opinions on any of the games reviewed in *PC Zone* over the last three months. Whether you want to sing a game's praises or simply give it a verbal beating, we want to hear from you. Remember to keep your comments between 50 and 150 words and include your name, address and age.

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E-MAIL Alternatively, e-mail them to us at ***letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk*** with **'Feedback'** in the subject line.

"I don't normally pay a blind bit of notice to ambient sound in games, but *Spec Ops* really brings home how effective good use of sound can be"

MIKE MOORE

MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS 2

REVIEWED Issue 65, July
SCORE 70%

What we thought

"As racing games go, *MTM2* is a bit disappointing. The network bashing-about options are okay, but the racing's a bit slow-paced and dull... and the lack of a season option is a major oversight – who wants to compete in single races over and over again?"

What you think

"I just picked up *Monster Truck Madness 2* and was disappointed to find that it seems impossible to add computer opponents to a multiplayer game. I understand that they might cause lag in Internet games, but I play on a LAN. Other than that though, the game's great. The graphics are incredible and the gameplay is addictive. I loved the original, and this one tops it in every way (except for the above, of course)."

Geoff Kloess, 26

"*MTM2* is a *blast*! I highly recommend it. Awesome graphics and the fun factor is through the roof, especially multiplayer with friends on the Net. Get it!"

Jeff Jones, 32

SPEC OPS: RANGERS ASSAULT

REVIEWED Issue 65, July
SCORE 88%

What we thought

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

"Okay, there are similarities with *Seal Team* (*PCZ* #7, 77%), but the emphasis in gameplay is more towards action than in EA's ageing simulation... For the most part though, *Spec Ops* is refreshingly original."

What you think

"Almost a worthy *Seal Team* follow-up game, but without all the detail management that made *Seal Team* so much fun. More arcade than simulation. Not a bad game, but definitely not *Seal Team 2*."

Brant Rusch

"I don't normally pay a blind bit of notice to ambient sound in games, but *Spec Ops* really brings home how effective good use of sound can be. Creeping through forests, listening to birds chirping away above you, while all the time dreading the sound of an impending enemy vehicle makes for amazing suspense."

Mike Moore, 25

"*Spec Ops'* graphics are top-notch. It's just a shame I had to splash out on a 3D card to get them running at a decent enough (playable) speed. There goes another pay packet! Ah well, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em!"

Doug Smith, 29



***Spec Ops*: effective use of graphics and sound have made a covert splashdown among gamers. Strategy buffs aren't so happy, though.**

X MEN: THE RAVAGES OF APOCALYPSE

REVIEWED Issue 65, July
SCORE 58%

What we thought

"Fans of the comic book series might well see this game as essential, but in all honesty they won't be impressed. If you want to keep *Quake* alive, get a modem. Failing that, get yourself a copy of *Malice*."



***X-Men*: *PC Zone* is not alone in thinking you'd be better off buying the comics instead of shelling out cash for this tacky effort.**

What you think

"Crap. One of the lamest conversions for *Quake* available. Terrible weapons, abysmal level design, and an overall feeling of 'cheapness'. The worst crime is that somebody is making money out of this dog."

Brant Rusch

"Love the comics, hate the game. Something like the *X-Men* deserves its own engine developed by a team that can seriously kick butt. What it doesn't deserve is some sad-assed excuse to rehash the *Quake* engine. Why don't iD Software 'vet' the people they sell the *Quake* engine on to, like Nintendo do with their hardware? That way we can avoid gaming abortions like *Ravages Of Apocalypse*."

*P****d Off*



***Monster Truck*: we had reservations about Microsoft's latest stab at arcade gaming, but you lot love it.**

THE LAST EXPRESS – AGAIN

***Paul Presley* has a change of heart...**

In issue 52 I reviewed *The Last Express* in Reviews Extra. I looked at it for a day or two, used my experience of the genre to make assumptions, and gave what I thought was a fair review. I gave it a score of 72% and no more was said. How wrong I was! *The Last Express* is simply one of the most breathtakingly well-written, well-designed, well-crafted and well-presented adventures of recent times. The script is astonishingly intelligent and mature and is superbly written (and not just by computer game standards – it could easily stand against most TV or cinematic dramas). The characterisations are of such quality that you really come to care for these people. The puzzles are woven with such perfection into the story that there's never a moment when you feel something has been added gratuitously for the sake of gameplay.

I would urge any adventure fan to seek out *The Last Express* and enjoy its richness themselves. It doesn't deserve to be overlooked (as it was), and if I were scoring it now I could give it no less than 95%. I would also urge Brøderbund to give it another marketing push. And, finally, I would like to apologise to Jordan Mechner and his team at Smoking Car Productions for having mistreated *The Last Express* when it appeared.

"There's nothing worse than a game that's only difficult because the enemy guns are hugely overpowered compared to your own weenie weapons. It smacks of a programmer who can't be bothered to whip together a decent AI program."

Stewart Allen, 20

STARCRAFT

REVIEWED Issue 64, June
SCORE 88%

What we thought

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED **"Think of *StarCraft* as Blizzard's generic mission disk for all your favourite RTS games and you won't be a million miles away from the truth."**

What you think

"You deemed *StarCraft* fit for only 88%. Why? It had bad AI and lacked originality. Well, maybe if you reviewed the proper version with the patch, instead of a beta version, you might find the AI is a bit better. As for lacking originality, it has one of the best and most original plots around, with some very original game units and good overall feel. Granted, it's from the same genre as *WarCraft* and *C&C*, but then so was *Red Alert*, and that wasn't deemed unoriginal, was it?"

Gordon McLachlan

"You said in your review: 'Do they wait patiently while their fellow combatants filter through and then follow suit? Not on your life. Prepare once again to stare in horror as your units travel halfway round the universe to get to their destination.'

"The [German] programmers have got the AI 105 per cent right. They've programmed the units with a German mentality… [the units are] pissed off that they're not in first place [in the queue] and will do anything to get there, even it means going halfway round the universe."

Richard Allen

QUAKE II: THE RECKONING

REVIEWED Issue 65, July
SCORE 84%

What we thought

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED **'While maintaining the authentic look and feel of *Quake II* and not fiddling around too much with the weapons or bad guys, *The Reckoning* is an enjoyable but unspectacular add-on."**

What you think

"I didn't go to town on the new deathmatch levels, but I kinda think that the single-player levels are actually better than the original's – they're more spooky. I'd have nudged the score up by a few per cent!"

Alan Jones, 23

"Man, oh man! The repair bots in *The Reckoning* are damned annoying! While they usually just fix doors and stuff, if they come across a freshly-toasted Strogg, they can bring 'em back to life, making your life miserable. Stuff should stay dead once they've been pulverised!"

Mat "Force", 18

"Is it just me, or are these add-on packages just the developers trying to cash in on us wee gameplayers? Stuff like this should be available for free, online. Am I the only one to feel this way?" *(Probably – Ed).*

Tim Scott, cynical and 30

WORLD CUP 98

REVIEWED Issue 65, July
SCORE 91%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"The fact we've already been playing the game solidly for an entire week – and expect to be playing it throughout the summer – says it all. Quite simply the finest football game on the PC."**



↑ ***World Cup 98*: the World Cup Final on your PC. And not a sign of England anywhere… *(Oh ye of little faith – Ed).***

What you think

"My mate bought the footie game *ISS64* for his Nintendo. It was brilliant. I hated him for a long time – us PC gamers only had the likes of *FIFA 98*. He now hates me because I've got *World Cup 98*. Revenge would have been sweet, but the bastards are releasing it on the N64 as well!"

Rob May, 17

"This is heaven! Top graphics *and* top realism. The controls may be a bit of a handful, but it's well worth the effort. With the rabble-rousing Chumbawamba track slapped on at the beginning, this is the business."

Trevor Barton, 21

"It's the closest I'll… hic… get to the World Cup this year. Mmm… wonder if that kebab shop does home deliveries?"

'Gazza'



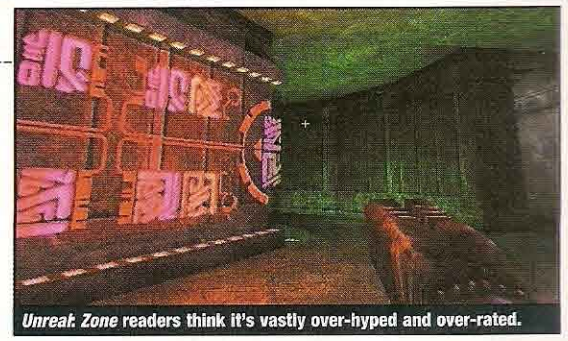
***StarCraft: PC Zone*'s comments about dumb AI have triggered off a war of words among readers.**

UNREAL

REVIEWED Issue 65, July
SCORE 93%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"It isn't better than *Quake II*. Deathmatch lets it down. In single-player, however, it's perhaps the slickest, most engrossing game you'll encounter this year. *Unreal* may not be stunningly original, but it is enthralling, exciting… and huge."**



***Unreal*: *Zone* readers think it's vastly over-hyped and over-rated.**

What you think

"Is *Unreal* a notch above *Quake II*? Yes. But is it a *Quake II* killer? Not by a long shot. *Unreal* debuted in a very similar way to *Quake*: with lots of praise for its incredible graphics engine and the architecture. However, the game itself is lacking:

- The monsters are weak, no two ways about it. They move unnaturally… as if the world they inhabit has never heard of inertia.
- Outdoor areas are large, but remind me of the simplistic environments of *Turok* more than *Quake II*. They seem to be populated by giant polygons pretending to be rocks, and the odd polygonal tree. I guess PCs don't have the horsepower yet to do a true rolling terrain outdoor environment. However, to their credit, they are *huge*…
- The sound is weak, and the weapons are somewhat on the bland side.

Is it a great game though? Sure, this isn't *Tekwar*. On the other hand, is it going to thrill people the same way *Quake II* did? I don't think so, nor do I think it will stand up to *Half-Life*. But time will tell, and there's no knocking the engine – it's got serious potential."

Brant Rusch

"*Unreal* is quite good, but it's not that good, is it? It seems like a lot of people just finished the first and second levels then went on the Net hyping and raving like crazy. Sure, the initial levels are a little chilling, but after a while the effect wears off considerably. I'm in the middle of the game and things are quite ho-hum. Does it get better in the end? I sure hope so…"

Kevin Nguyen, 23

"*Unreal* is not the action-packed game that many people made it sound. My brother played the first few levels of the game and ended up getting bored – he was tired of running around looking for stuff to kill. The replay factor isn't very high – it's fun seeing the 'tricks' for the first time, but after three or four times, you get bored. The AI is definitely better than *Quake II* but it's not all that people have hyped it to be."

Roscoe A Sincero, 20-something

"They work on a game for four frigging years, and then the multiplayer doesn't work! What the hell have they been doing – laying eggs or something?"

Asad Aquil Siddiqui, 18

"The single-player game is superb, but the multiplayer is ropey when compared to *Quake II*. The reason? It appears the Net code in *Unreal* needs some serious work – at the mo, 99% of the players on the Net get so much lag, the game is totally unplayable."

Felix

"If you buy one game this year, buy *Unreal*. This isn't your mindless shoot 'em up – it's more like going to see a great sci-fi movie and having complete control over what is going on. The special effects are incredible. The atmosphere and attention to detail are so much better than any game I've seen."

John Zuehlke, 28

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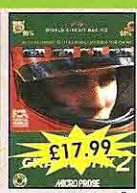
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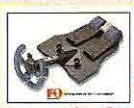
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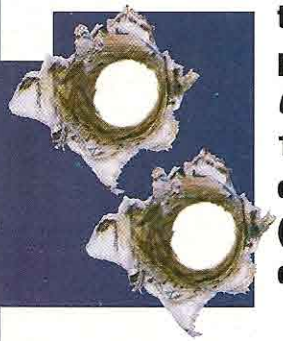
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TROUBLESHOOTER



Over the next 17 pages we help you with everything from how to complete *Spec Ops* (page 138), to 3D accelerator solutions (page 144), to disk duplication problems with *Core Contingency* (page 152), to building your own *Quake* levels (page 146). No one does it better!

ON THE CD



We've got solutions to over 1200 games on this month's CD. Check out the Editorial section of your CD-ROM browser to track them down.

NEED HELP?

If your problem's game-related, get organised and...

WRITE TO Help!, Troubleshooter, PC Zone, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ

E-MAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with **'Dear Keith'** in the subject line.

CHEATS WIN PRIZES

If you've got any tips or cheats then we want to hear from you. The best wins a recommended game of our choice.

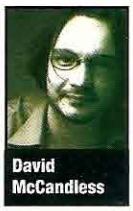
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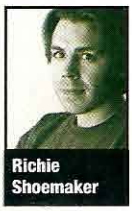
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YOUR HOSTS


Warren Chrismas


Keith Pullin


David McCandless


Richie Shoemaker

DEAR KEITH

Questions, questions, questions. Will it ever end? Hopefully not, otherwise we'd have to make 'em all up

ANSWERED BY Keith Pullin

ATOMIC BOMB SHELL

Q My mates have finally made me realise I'm crap at *Atomic Bomberman*. What can I do to improve my play?

Luke Gramps, Manchester

A **What a bizarre request. Just practise, mate. If you're that bothered about losing all the time you could press F10 when you get blown up, because that invalidates the round completely. This is sly, but very effective.**

A RIGHT CORKER

Q *Discworld II: Mortality Bytes* is my game of woe. I'm stuck at the fountain of youth. No matter what I try I can't seem to make anything happen. What am I doing wrong?

Peter Legg, Rotherham

A **Try this: go to Bonestock and collect the cork. When you've done that, visit Djelibeybe and wait until the prospector arrives. When he does, take the canteen from his saddlebag, then use the arm on the saddlebag. Go to the fountain of youth, use the cork on the fountain, then use Death's hourglass on the sand. This should enable you to get further. How's that?**

BLADE RUNNER

Q Please don't ignore me because I'm playing an old game, but can you help me on *Dungeon Master 2*? I walk through a gate which slams shut behind me, and am then confronted by a statue of a shopkeeper. Suddenly a snake leaps out of the statue and attacks me! There is absolutely nothing I can do to save myself. Please, please help.

Warren, Lewisham

A **Blimey! I remember that, and it is a bit of a shocker. What you have to do is attack the snake with the Vorpal Blade; any other weapon is completely useless. Oh, and by the way, you will need to use that same blade later in the game as well, so keep it handy. Off you go, and good luck.**

PAPER WEIGHT

Q On *Might & Magic VI* I require a scroll describing the combination of the vault. Apparently it's imperative to have this in order to complete quest two. Am I on the right track here?

Tom Banton, Utah (e-mail)

A **You certainly are, Tom. You'll probably solve it yourself if you try harder, but here goes anyway. Outside Goblinwatch there's quite a few goblin guards. If you wander round to the rear of the keep, you can access the upper part of the watch via a ramp. You'll reach a room with a silent Goblin. From here, walk right and down, and in the last room are several wall cabinets. Inside one of these cabinets is a wall safe containing the scroll that describes the combination to the vault. This is the scroll you so desperately desire.**

BRIDGE TOO FAR

Q I'm wandering around the Hulime jungle in *Lands Of Lore* and I reach a rickety bridge which always collapses on me. What the hell do I have to do to get any further?

Steve Gordon, Hants

A **Who ever let you loose on a PC? Just don't cross it while you're a beast, it can't support your weight. That's all there is to it.**

MISS YOU

Q I thought I'd spend some time on a flight simulation so I bought *Apache Longbow*. It's a superb game and everything, it's just that I'm forever getting shot down. On top of that my aiming is not quite what it should be, and consequently I've never shot anyone down! A friend mentioned that there might be some cheats, so I thought I'd find out from you. If there are, can you print them for me please?

Julian Hind, Guernsey

A **Okay. Select PILOT'S LOG from the main menu, and type MONTY BARRYMORE as the user name and pilot name. Doing this makes you invincible and give you the best weapons available. If you can't hit anything after that, you may as well give up and try something else instead.**

MONEY MARK

Q On *Carmageddon* I've heard you can get a massive bonus if you do a loop the loop three times in a row. I've tried this but all I get is a cunning stunt bonus which is big, but not that big. What's the story?

Bazza F, Crawley

A **Once you've done the loop three times and received your cunning stunt bonus, type ISTHATALL and you'll receive about 250,000 credits – now that's a *big* bonus, wouldn't you agree?**

WASHED OUT

Q I bought *EA Sports Cricket* and I can't believe how shit it is. Why on earth are games like this released? What can I do with it? Do you want it?

Chris Newton, Middx

A **God, no! I'll tell you what you can do with it though, and that's type in SARI to get weird bowling effects. Granted, it doesn't justify shelling out 30 quid, but at least you can laugh with it for a while rather than at it. Here's another cheat for you to use as well: type STARWA and you'll get extra fast runners. Great.**

HARD AS NAILS

Q You're going to think this is really strange, but is there a way to make *FIFA: RTWC* any harder? The thing is, the first time I ever picked it up and played it I managed to get all the way to the World Cup Final and win – against China of all people, but there you go. Anyway, I just think it should be harder.

David Willerby, N. Acton

A **No, it's not strange at all. You wouldn't believe the number of people who have exactly the same gripe. The only thing you can do really is either turn all the help off or pick a really bad team. Sorry, but there's little more I can say.**

CHEATMASTER

OVER 1200 CHEATS ON THE PC ZONE WEBSITE! www.pczone.co.uk

Suffering from a terminal illness known as 'antiworldcupitis'? No doubt you'll be spending the next few days avoiding humanity and growling at your PC, so here's a few tips to help

CHEATMEISTER Keith Pullin



"It's not fair, you know. We fight fair and the British use cheat codes." "I blame that *PC Zone*. They're always bloody publishing them."

COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES
(Eidos Interactive)

Are nazis making your life a misery? Never fear, these codes will help you to silence the Hun:

Level 2 **4JJXB**
Level 3 **ZDD1T**
Level 4 **RFF1J**
Level 5 **K4TCG**
Level 6 **DT1WN**
Level 7 **IH3W1**
Level 8 **52WJ7**
Level 9 **924BF**
Level 10 **HYBM3**

MOTORHEAD
(Gremlin)

Last month we printed some cheats for this gritty racer and promised you more this month. Well, staying true to our word, here they are:

STRANGE SUSPENSION Access the personal options screen, enter your name as **'g-ride'** and the team name as **'west'**. You'll find some weird things have happened to your suspension (again).

MOON GRAVITY Access the personal options screen, enter your name as **'Buzz Aldrin'** and the team name as **'NASA'**. This installs moon gravity into the game. It's a bit tough to control, mind you.

IGNITION MODE Access the personal options screen, enter your name as **'Ignition'** and the team name as **'UDS'**. You are now in Ignition mode. (Remember the game?)

NOSTALGIA MODE (Hardware acceleration only) Go to the personal options screen, enter your name as **'Avenger'** and the team name as **'Zxquote'**. Anybody who ever had a game called *Avenger* on the Spectrum will be in for a nostalgic treat!

WATER MODE (Hardware acceleration only) Go to the personal options screen, enter your name as **'Ramlosa'** and the team name as **'H2Orquote'**. You are now in water mode. Gloop.

CARS AND TRACKS Access the personal options screen, enter your name as **'R Peterson'** and the team name as **'Swe'**. This gives you access to all cars and all the tracks.

LEMMY! (Hardware acceleration only) Go to the personal options screen, enter your name as **'Lemmy'** and the team name as **'Ace'**. Aah, that Lemmy, he's so cuddly.

FIFA: WORLD CUP '98
(EA Sports)

Change the players' names to the cheat codes below and press Enter. After entering the codes, press 'back' **to access the previous menu, which will undo the changes so that players' real names appear. Back at the main menu, press** 'Scroll Lock' **to activate the cheats. And if anyone's wondering, yes, it is the same method employed to enter cheats on *FIFA: RTWC*.**

Kenny Flaming ball
Gabo Big heads
Hurst Enables '82, '74, '70 and '66 classic matches featuring England playing against various teams
Zico Enables you to play the classic 1982 encounter between Brazil and France
Kyle Skeletal players
Cartman Take a dive
Gonzo Hot potato ball
Mr Hat Crazy ball
Powder Silly moves
Neila Alien mode

FORSAKEN
(Acclaim)

On any menu screen, type the following for an easy ride:

Bubbles Enable all cheats
Thefullmonty Select level
Iamzeus God mode
Titsoot Turn on the adult textures if you have access to the special ship
Lumberjack Missile toggle
Jimbeam Beam toggle

MYTH: THE FALLEN LORDS
(Eidos Interactive)

A quick but effective cheat to help you conquer the myth:

Hold the spacebar down and select the **'new game'** option. Now, during gameplay hold **'ctrl'** and press the **'+'** key on the keypad. This should skip you on to the next level.

BATTLEZONE
(Activision)

A couple of months ago we printed some codes for *Battlezone*, and bloody good they were too. Unbeknown to us there were some more floating around, so without further ado here they are:

Hold down control and shift at the same time and then type **BZVIEW.** This gives you a satellite view without requiring a comm' tower first. You'll know the cheat's worked if the screen flashes yellow and a sound effect chimes in.

For the ultimate cheater, type **IAMADIRTYCHEATER** on the mission start screen and you are able to access all the missions. Now that *is* dirty.

BUST-A-MOVE 2: ARCADE EDITION
(Taito)

This brilliant game doesn't really need any cheats, but there are always a few morons out there. So for the select few, here's your secret:

During the game, hold **'E'** and **'W'** to skip to the next stage. It's that simple. Good, eh?

MADDEN '98
(EA Sports)

It's quite baffling why some people need to cheat on sports games. But anyway, here you go. Type the following during gameplay:

IMPROVED ABILITY:

LEECH Better defensive backs
GLOVES Catching made easier
BIGFOOT Kicking made easier
JACKHAMMER Better stiff arm

EXTRA TEAMS:

ORRS HEROES EA Sports
LOIN CLOTH Tiburon
LEADERS All-time leaders
COACH All Time All Madden
PAC ATTACK '60s team
STEELCURTAIN '70s team
GOLD RUSH '80s team
ALOHA NFC
LUAU AFC

EXTRA STADIUMS:

JETSONS Astrodome (old Oilers)
DAWGPOUND Cleveland Browns' stadium
SNAKE Old Oakland stadium
DANDAMAN Old Miami Dolphins' stadium
OLDDC RFK Stadium (old Redskins)
SHARKSFIN Tiburon Sports Complex
GHOST TOWN Wild West stadium in Texas circa 1800

SENTINEL RETURNS
(Psygnosis)

One of the best games of all time is back and it's as scary and perplexing as ever. We don't like to think of you suffering, so here's ten pointers to get you on your way:

KEEP MOVING Stand in one place for too long and a Sentinel or Sentry soon spots you.

USE BOULDERS Always try to put a boulder down before you transfer. This gives you a much better view from your next location.

USE WALLS When you do transfer, always try and stick close to the walls – using the walls as cover means you stand a lot less less chance of being spotted.

BEWARE OF HALF-SCANS When these occur, a nearby tree is transformed into a meanie who then transfers you to one of the lowest points on the landscape.

ABSORB ENERGY The more things you absorb, the more energy you gain. Energy is insurance – the more you have, the longer you can withstand your enemies' powerful glare. Oh, and you also skip more landscapes if you have loads of energy left when you complete the level.

BE ACCURATE Sometimes, even when you're level with a Sentry or Sentinel and can't quite see the space they occupy, you find you can still absorb them – it does take accurate pointing and clicking though.

TURN QUICKLY Remember to use the **'u'** key to turn around quickly. This is especially useful on later levels when five, six or even seven sentries have to be absorbed quickly.

I-SPY Find a safe place and study the Sentinel to see which way and how fast he's rotating. Same with awkward Sentries too.

THE FINAL ROBOT When you've absorbed the Sentinel, if you turn around quick enough you can absorb your last remaining robot.

USE HYPERSPACE If you find yourself in what appears to be a no-win scenario, and you keep dying before you've barely moved, use the **'h'** key to hyperspace to a random location. This is a rather risky venture, but at least it gets you out of a predicament.

If you're having trouble with a particular game, try calling the helpful PC ZONE *tips line on* ***0171 917 7698****; It's open on Thursdays only from 3.30pm until 7pm.*

SPEC OPS: US ARMY RANGERS

COMPLETE WALKTHROUGH

Mark Long*, one-time Army Ranger and now grande fromage at Zombie Studios, leads us though his pride and joy. Bringing up the rear: *Richie Shoemaker

REVIEWED *PCZ* #66 • **SCORE** 88%

MISSION 1

VORONYE FOREST, RUSSIA

The first level takes place in Siberia. An Aurora spy plane has crashed and you must retrieve its Top Secret Data Module.

PHASE 1

This team must neutralise enemy forces and shut down the Spetznatz communications centre. Follow your GPS and head south-east to the main road. Ambush the enemy troop truck and destroy it, then follow the GPS and the road to the communications centre.



Use the grenade launcher to destroy the truck, then mop up the remains. Communications centre dead ahead.





The Aurora spy plane isn't guarded too well – thankfully.



Once the plane is destroyed it's time to radio in.

Destroy the radio with gunfire or explosives. Radio in and report.

PHASE 2

With communications knocked out, this Ranger team must retrieve the Data Module. Both Rangers have a Data Module key which will unlock the hatch on the nose of the Aurora spy plane. Follow your GPS and the fires in the trench created by the plane crash. Use the key to retrieve the Module and report in.

PHASE 3

After retrieving the Module, you must clear the way for the exfiltration helicopter. Head east

up the ravine and towards the anti-aircraft emplacements. Use a bounding overwatch technique, moving forward, then sending your buddy forward, then yourself in a leap-frogging manner. At the top, blow up the guns and radio in. Head north-east down the hill towards the extraction site. Board the helicopter and exfiltrate with the Data Module.



Place charges by both anti-aircraft guns.



All done and dusted – and with still a minute to spare.

MISSION 2

KAPSAN MOUNTAINS, NORTH KOREA

This level takes place in North Korea. Your mission is to take out a chemical weapons manufacturing facility. The first three teams will soften up the base for the demolition's team in the fourth mission.

PHASE 1



A grenade will disable the alarm.



That's the radar dish dealt with. Now where's the bridge?

The air defence radar must be taken out, and a bridge that will cut off their troops destroyed. A base alarm will be set off if the enemy sees you, but it can be disabled by blowing up the second guard shack. Follow the road and your GPS to the radar base and destroy the radar dish to



The bridge – beware of guards.

disable their air defence network. Now proceed through the camp, following the GPS and the road to the bridge. To destroy the bridge, place a satchel charge in the middle of it. Having done that, radio in and report.

PHASE 2

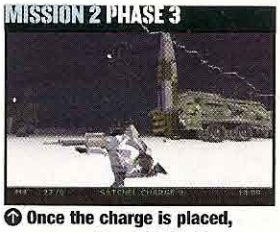
Now you must take out the North Korean air capability; the GPS will lead you. Head north-east into the air base support camp. From the camp, turn west and proceed to the airfield. When you come to some trucks and a bunker, turn north to the airfield. The first aircraft is directly ahead. To the west is another on the runway, and to the east are the last two. Destroy all of them and radio in.



Once you've found the planes, the rest is easy.

PHASE 3

This mission's goal is to destroy the North Korean chemical weapons deliverance capability – you must eliminate four SCUD launchers. You assume control of the Ranger team on the base perimeter of the first SCUD site. Destroy both launchers with satchel charges at the base of the missiles. Now proceed north to the road to the second base. Follow the GPS and look out for



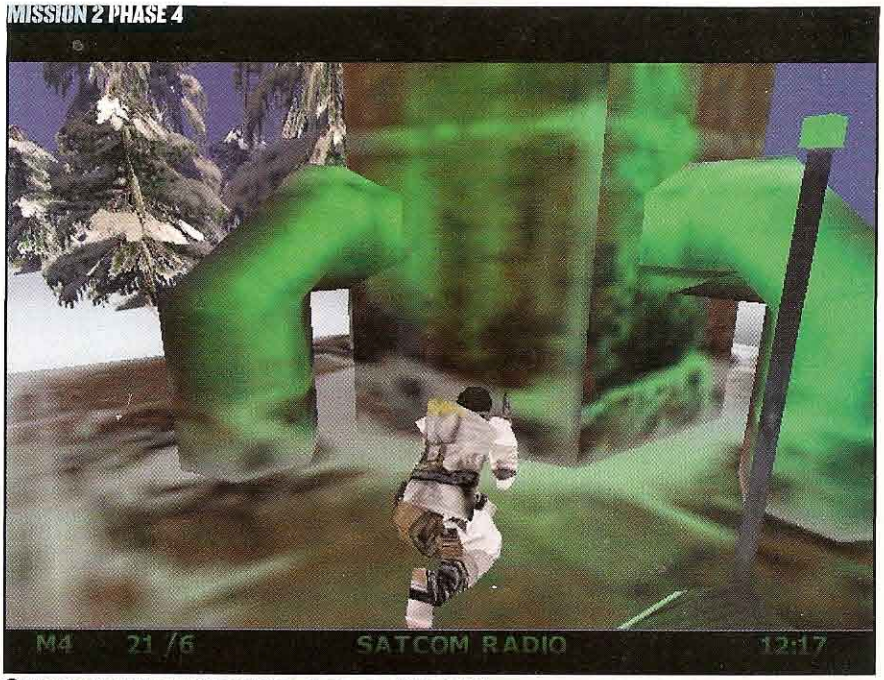
Once the charge is placed, move away to avoid the blast.



Destroy APCs using a satchel charge.



Come on now – a sniper rifle wasn't really necessary, was it?

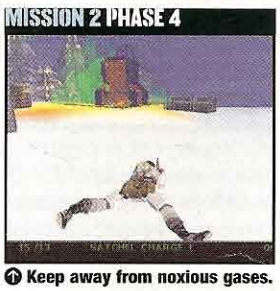


It's easy to get lost in this mission, so use your GPS at all times.

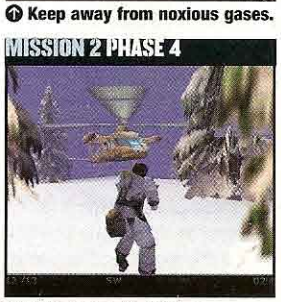
the APC along the way – you must destroy them with satchels or high explosives. After blasting the second base to kingdom come, radio in and report.

PHASE 4

The final mission is to destroy the chemical weapons storage facilities and their air defence radar. The USAF bombers will destroy the plant after your exfiltration. Follow the GPS and head north to the first manifold. Destroy it, but avoid the poisonous gas which will be released. The second manifold is north of the first site, and the third is north of the second. The radar base is south-west of the third manifold. Destroy the radar, and radio in for your exfiltration helicopter.



Keep away from noxious gases.



Well, if it ain't ol' Mr Chopper.

SPEC OPS CHEATS

1. Delete the savedata.txt file from your specops directory and you'll be able to access any of the missions.

2. For invincibility, press ALT+SHIFT+V during the missions and then switch to your inventory and select the viewfinder. The screen will go blue for a second and your Ranger will leap up. You now have ten minutes to complete the mission, as well as a sponge-like ability to absorb limitless attacks.



There are Colombian guards behind almost every tree.



Typical journalists, they give up far too easily.

MISSION 3

MAGDALENA RIVER, COLOMBIA

You are in the jungles of Colombia. Colonel Marcos has been running a large cocaine production operation – you must capture him and shut down his operations.



Raspberry beret? Nope – must be Colonel Marcos.

PHASE 1

Your mission is to capture Colonel Marcos. Head north-west, following your GPS, to the jungle path. Beware – it's long and packed with enemy. Good tactics involving your Ranger buddy are vital. Use your bounding overwatch technique. You will come to a clearing with a large hacienda building. Find Marcos – be careful: you don't want to kill him, you must capture him.

PHASE 2

Your goal for this mission is to destroy the enemy barracks and supplies. You must destroy five buildings with satchel charges, so ensure you have enough of them to complete the task. Destroying this infrastructure will significantly impact the cocaine producer's ability to operate. Follow the jungle path north and use your GPS to find the training camp and barracks. A satchel charge in the middle of the barracks will destroy them. Again, good use of a bounding overwatch will help. When the buildings are destroyed, radio in and report.



The rickety bridge leading to the enemy camp.



Place the satchel charges in each building and get the hell out.



That's the way to do it!

PHASE 3

This last mission will destroy the production facilities. You are the spotter team for a napalm air strike. To the west are the lab buildings. Radio in for instructions, and then place a smoke grenade in the middle of the camp to mark the location for the napalm bombers. Radio in after placing the grenade, and get out of the strike zone. When you get the broadcast that Marcos has escaped, you have another mission: locate and eliminate Marcos. Follow your new GPS destination to the helicopter crash site and take him out. Then radio in and board the exfiltration helicopter.



Call in the bombers once you've placed a smoke marker.



Use a pineapple to flush the bastards out.



Right in the knackers – that's gotta hurt.

MISSION 4

SIERRA DE SOCONUSCO, HONDURAS

Level 4 is set in the deserts of Honduras. A container of weapons-grade plutonium is being sold to a militia group. Your task is to intercept and recover it covertly. News of its disappearance has been covered up and the cover must be maintained.

PHASE 1



Headshots count. These guys have body armour.



Blow the gates and get outta here sharpish.

You must infiltrate the perimeter of the militia base and blow up the entry gate to gain access. Follow the road and your GPS to the perimeter gate. There are bunkers and guard towers with enemies in them lining the road. A Ranger with a sniper rifle could be very helpful. When you reach the gate blow it up with a satchel and radio in.

PHASE 2

A news group is meeting with the militia. You must destroy their ability to broadcast their story, and capture a militia officer with knowledge of the plutonium's whereabouts.

Follow the road to the media camp. Along the way you will find a guard point of militia in their camp of RVs. Their position is well defended, but a well-thrown grenade or M203 shot will take them out. Continue on past the RVs and follow the road. After passing a collection of buildings



Guess that'll be the grenade launcher then.



With a grenade launcher shoot the dish – NOT the van.

follow the road up the hill past the school bus. At the top you will find the media van. Shoot the dish antenna with a grenade launcher to disable the van. Do not blow up the van: the militia officer is inside and you need his information. When he jumps out, capture him to learn the location of the plutonium. Radio in and report.

PHASE 3

This is the mission to intercept and capture the plutonium. Follow your GPS north-west to the oil facility and find the catwalks that will take you to the top of the largest tank. The transfer will take place here. Find and eliminate the plutonium buyer. Take possession of the case and radio in. Now you have to make your way to your exfiltration helicopter. Look out for the enemy helicopter.



Get the plutonium. It's behind the crates.



You've stirred up a hornets' nest. Find the chopper.

MISSION 5

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

This level takes place in war-torn Afghanistan. US senator Janet Galore has been captured by Mujahadeen forces and is being held hostage. A rescue mission is being mounted by US Rangers.

PHASE 1

This is a support mission for the hostage rescue team. Afghani soldiers feuding with the Mujahadeen are bombing the fort where the senator is being held. The goal of this mission is to take out the Afghani rocket launcher in the city to protect the senator. The GPS in your inventory is useless here. The GPS satellites are not available for updates but you can use the compass portion. The city is very dangerous and it is easy to get lost.

You start out on the edge of the city. Head east through the double arches and turn north on the road, and then east. There is a very dangerous tank coming up to the square but you need to get past it. Only your satchel charge is powerful enough to take out the tank, but it is difficult to place. Follow the road east and then turn south-east. Stay on the road – it will turn east next. Turn south at the intersection and keep going until the road turns west (it ends at a Y intersection). Turn north-west and then follow it west. At the corner, turn south, then at the next one turn west. Shortly after the turn there is a bridge to the south. Cross it and continue

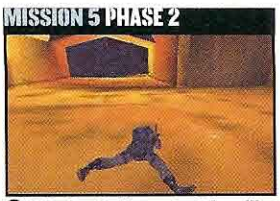


Don't worry, you'll find the rocket launcher eventually.

south. Pick up the road again and follow it south, then turn west. Turn south-west and continue following the road which will then turn south-east. After that, it will turn east. When you come to the intersection turn north into the square. Destroy the rocket launcher with a satchel charge or high explosive grenade, and radio in.

PHASE 2

The purpose of this mission is to soften up the fort for the hostage rescue team's exfiltration. You



This door's blown, but there'll be guards behind.



Shall we use a satchel charge? Oh why the hell not.



Tanks for the memory (ho, ho, stop it, you're killing me – no, really).

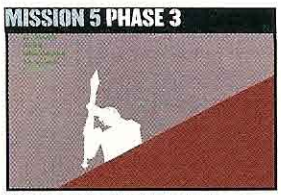
must blow up the fort's main gate to gain access, and take out the anti-aircraft emplacements along the fort walls. There are three guns to be destroyed. Take a Ranger with a satchel charge to blow the gate. Head towards the fires and the fort. Blow up the gate with a satchel. Go through the gate and turn left to find stairs going up to the wall. Follow the wall to the first gun. Retrace your path to the main gate and go past it up more stairs. The second gun is at the top of the stairs. The third anti-aircraft gun is along the wall, past the second one. Destroy it and then radio in.

PHASE 3

The last part of this mission is to rescue the senator from deep inside the fort. Follow the passage-way, keeping to your left as much

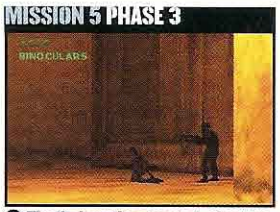


Now who went and left this lying about?



A new toy for the snipers – a rifle, very handy.

as possible, to get to her. Look out for snipers on the rooftops – you're more or less running through an ambush the entire way. Stealth and caution are your only chance. After rescuing the senator, meet your exfiltration helicopter and ride out. PCZ



That's her, the senator, about to take a fatal hit.



Now to escape, and if you thought getting in was difficult...

GENERAL H INCE

As a general rule you'll need to balance your men: one with either the heavy machine-gun or M16 with underslung grenade launcher, and the other packing the state-of-the-art sniper rifle. Always make sure you have the required number of satchel charges as well, as you don't want to end up spending precious time searching for equipment. Don't worry too much about claymores, you can get by quite easily without them.

MOVE ON UP Use your team-mate to scout up ahead. Once he's in position, move up yourself until you've taken out one of the enemy. Keep doing this and you should be able to make up ground quickly without taking too many hits.

SWAP MEN If the guy under your control is low on health, switch over – the computer will take better care of the guy than you generally will. If you do lose one of them, don't be too concerned – some missions are even easier when all you have to worry about is yourself. An important factor when swapping over is not to leave your computer-aided comrade in control of the grenade launcher: he doesn't know how to operate it properly and will use it at close range without switching weapons.

RELOAD Keep an eye on how many rounds are left in your weapon – you don't want to enter a firefight with an empty mag. Reloading may only take a second, but you could be half dead before you get your first shot in.

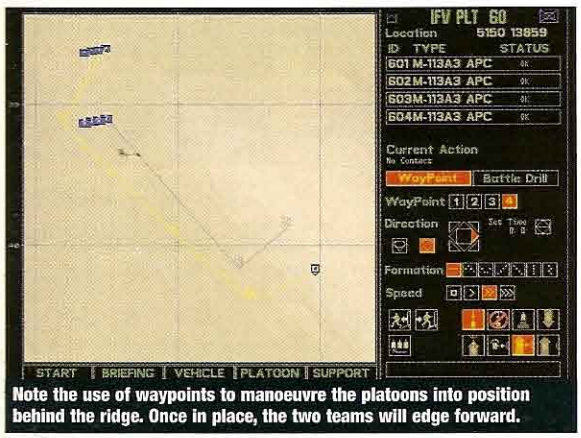
REST IN PEACE Don't move too quickly over open ground. Use buildings and trees as cover and the enemy will not be able to surround you. As no one can fire through wire fences, skirt around them. Lying prone is also quite dangerous, as the enemy can shoot you as you get up. Kneeling is the best option.

LISTEN UP A lot of effort has gone into getting the sound effects right. Pump up the volume – even better, plug in some studio-quality headphones – and you'll hear the direction from which the enemy is approaching. *Spec Ops* looks good and sounds even better.

M1 TANK PLATOON

Andrew Wright, who's been shut up inside his virtual M1 for months, pops his head out the hatch long enough to provide a few hints on MicroProse's hugely impressive *M1 Tank Platoon II*

REVIEWED *PCZ* #63 • **SCORE** 90%



Note the use of waypoints to manoeuvre the platoons into position behind the ridge. Once in place, the two teams will edge forward.

MicroProse's *M1 Tank Platoon II* is one of the best sims there is, full stop. And it's so realistically modelled that anything that works in real life works in the game.

As in the real world, planning is the key. No plan ever survives contact with the enemy, but without one you're sunk. Look at your assets, the units the enemy is likely to have and the terrain involved. In offensive operations, look for safe corridors that will shield you from fire as you move into position – low ground is ideal. In defence, analyse the terrain and look for killing zones where you can damage OPFOR without taking risks.

Don't just head straight for the objective when you attack, identify lesser objectives that will lead to the main one. For example, drive the enemy armour off hills overlooking the objective, or deploy long-range anti-tank missile-capable units such as M2 Bradleys to cover high ground behind the objective.

Focus on your mission – it might seem like fun to deviate from your plan to knock out a few hapless T72s at 2000m, but it wastes ammo and can jeopardise the mission.

Scouts are vital, so if you have infantry vehicles, detach one or two for scouting – minus their infantry complement. Just keep them moving fast and close to cover. When they do spot the enemy, pull them straight back. Choppers, which can spot over a wide area, are excellent scouts too. Just call them up and send them wherever you think the enemy forces are.

Don't waste your artillery or air support by only calling it up when you're in trouble. As soon as the game starts, begin pounding likely enemy positions.

Move in dispersed formations but fight en masse. Bunched-up forces are vulnerable to all kinds of attacks, so move with your vehicles well-spaced. When you attack, do it with everything you've got. If necessary, halt your lead elements and wait until the rest catch up before launching the actual assault. Try to concentrate your forces against smaller enemy formations. The chances are that you'll annihilate them without loss.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Know your enemy and learn how to prioritise your targets quickly. M1s are largely impervious to anti-tank fire from over 1000m, so target any tanks – even T72s – inside this range. T80s and T90s up to 2000m are also a threat, while the least appreciated threat is the ATGM. Forget the BMP-1s, as their AT-4 Spigot ATGMs can't penetrate an M1, and neither can BRDM-2s or BTRs. However, later vehicles like the BMP-2 and 3 and the BRDM-3 carry effective ATGMs with ranges up to 3000m, so don't ignore them.

If you're attacked from the side, almost anything can kill you, so be ready to back up or face your attacker very quickly. The Shift-G hotkey, added in the version 1.2 patch, is vital, as it turns your tank to face either the CITV or 50-calibre gun, depending on which view mode you are in.


These T72s have no chance against the M1's powerful gun.


If all else fails, the 50-calibre will punch through the armour of most lightly armoured vehicles.

POOR BLOODY INFANTRY

It's very tempting to leave your infantry vehicles – Bradleys, LAVs and M113s – undercover and fight it out with your M1s. However, TOW-equipped vehicles like the M2 Bradley have long-range firepower (up to 3750m) that shouldn't be ignored. They can be placed between 1000m and 2000m behind the M1s and still do some damage.

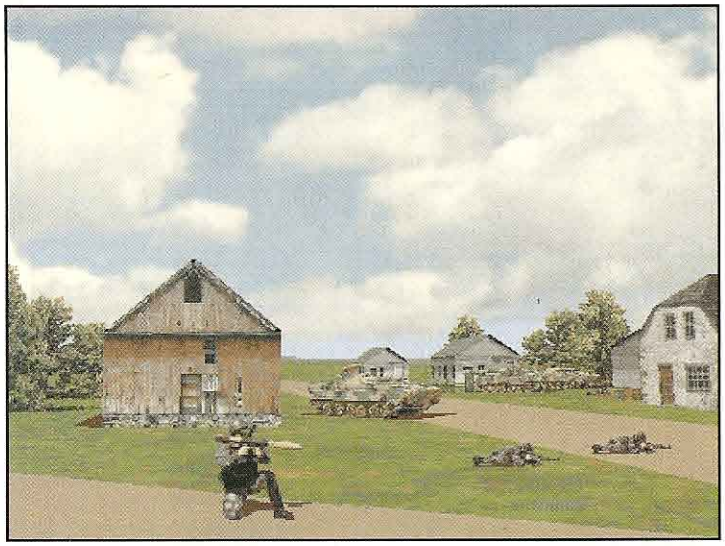
US infantry units consist of four or five soldiers armed with AT4s, Javelins and Stingers. Although the AT4s have a range of only 300m, the Javelins can kill at up to 2500m. The Stingers are also excellent against anti-aircraft weapons.

The main problem with infantry is that they can be spotted at unrealistically long ranges and can't go to ground, so are always vulnerable. The best tactics are to dismount infantry on reverse slopes, where they can hit anything coming over the crest very hard.

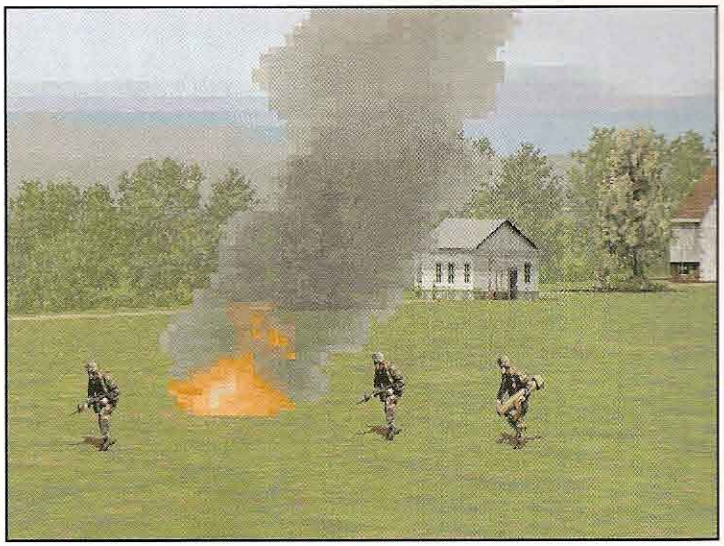
Spread your men out. The default formation is close line abreast, so one shell can often take them out. You need to manually move them a unit at a time to make them less vulnerable.

The only worthwhile cover for men is a burning vehicle, although they are less visible (it seems) if placed next to trees. PCZ

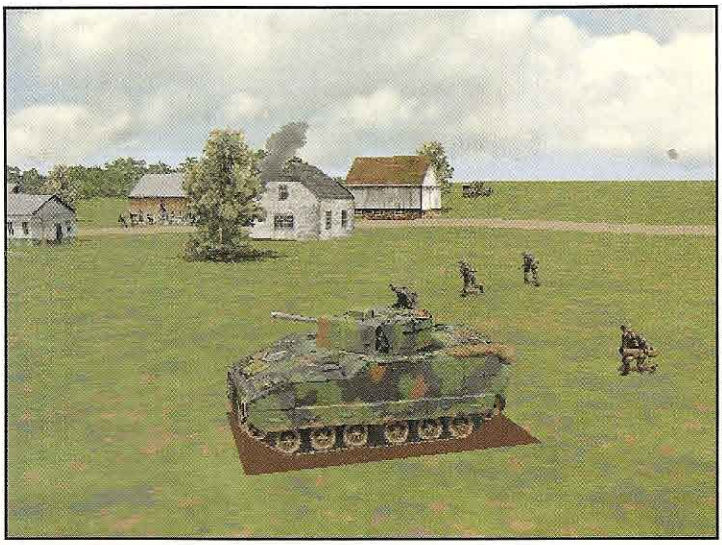

T80s are a different proposition entirely from the older T72s. Treat them with caution!



A five-man infantry team dismount from their Bradley. Note the excellent Javelin ATGM.



Infantry on foot are extremely vulnerable.



OPFOR troops – read Soviet/Russian – have only short-range RPG anti-tank weapons.



Without thermal sights when spotting, you wouldn't see these OPFOR infantry.

TEN TOP TIPS

Staying on top of the situation isn't difficult if you do the right things

Beware of roads – the enemy AI expects you to use them.

When crossing a crest line, do so with as many tanks as possible. That way, if there's a nasty surprise, you don't have half a dozen 125mm shells heading towards just one vehicle.

When advancing, keep your infantry-carrying vehicles 1000m or more behind the spearhead M1 platoon. However, keep your air defence vehicles just behind the M1s for maximum effect.

In an assault, place your M1s in wedge formation in the centre, with Bradleys or LAVs in echelon left and right to form a large wedge formation. Use smoke generators to create a screen, and call in artillery to keep the defenders' heads down.

It's hard to hit moving forces with artillery, but if you use the zoom map to work out a rough speed and direction, then lead off several hundred metres, with practice you should get the strike right. The other trick is to call for artillery straight on to the first OPFOR scout vehicles you see. By the time the rounds start hitting their target (hopefully), the main force should be arriving.

Before calling in air support, do your best to get rid of air defences (called SEAD – suppression of enemy air defence – in US military jargon). This includes ZSUs and self-propelled SAM launchers.

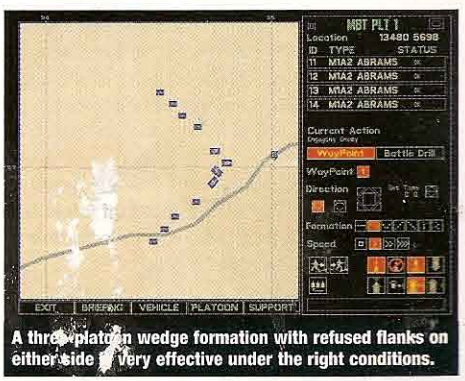
The best defence against infantry-launched ATGMs is to call in mortars or artillery right on top, then launch smoke and take evasive action.

Don't split your platoons except for vital scouting missions. Single M1s will be punished severely by OPFOR. Splitting a platoon into two two-tank sections for overwatch purposes is acceptable, but losses tend to be higher.

Don't just look for one firing position, look for several. Fire three or four shots and then retire or advance to the next firing position, and so on. This minimises the chance of an OPFOR artillery strike – or a visit by Havocs and Hinds.



Hull-down positions reduce the chances of a hit, although it didn't help this BMP-3.



A three-platoon wedge formation with refused flanks on either side – very effective under the right conditions.

DEAR WAZZA

PC Zone's resident agony uncle sensitively answers questions about your intimate technical problems, and tries to bribe your toppest tips out of you with a crisp £50 note

ANSWERED BY Warren Chrismas

GOT A QUERY, DEARY?

Share your techy or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may well share it with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in-type-thing. And as an extra incentive, every month we're offering a cool £50 to the reader that sends in the most interesting query or toppest tip. No, really. Send as much relevant information as you can. Please do not call 'cos we're busy putting the mag together. Thanks.

WRITE TO Cash For Questions, PC Zone, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.

E-MAIL Address your letters to us at **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk** with the subject heading **'Dear Wazza'.**

YOU JERK!

Q I recently bought a Matrox Mystique 220 3D accelerator and I've found that there's no improvement in games I used to play such as *Pod*, *Carmageddon* and *Interstate '76*. I mean no improvement at all – the same blocky textures and jerky frame rates! What must I do?

Peter Manogar, e-mail

A **Er, take the Matrox back? No, seriously, the Mystique 220 is a good card but it's not compatible with the two 3D accelerator standards most widely supported in games, namely 3Dfx Voodoo or PowerVR. You need to look for games which support either Direct3D (the lowest common denominator which all decent 3D cards are compatible with) or those that support the Mystique directly. In the case of *Pod* and *Interstate '76*, you must download and install software patches before you'll see any difference – http://matrox.dimension3d.com/ has all the information you need. *Carmageddon*, meanwhile, offers support – again, via a patch – only for 3Dfx Voodoo-based 3D accelerators.**

SOUNDING OFF

Q How can you use two different sound cards together as you suggested in your sound card review (*PCZ* #64)? Which one do you plug your speakers into? How do you choose which the sound comes through, etc? Another thing: can you plug your hi-fi into your sound card and use the surround capabilities of that for your computer? If so, how? And which sound card do you need?

Ivan Mazour, e-mail

A **How many questions?! Okay, if you have two sound boards installed you can simply run the Line Out from one card into the Line In of the second, connecting a single set of speakers to the output of the latter (use the board's software mixer to get the sound levels right). Or you could have speakers connected to both cards so that, say, you have sound effects going to desktop speakers, and MIDI or CD audio music going through your hi-fi. Select Multimedia Properties from the Windows Control Panel to set sound card priorities.**

If you do hook up your sound card to your hi-fi amplifier, use the Line Out socket of your sound card and the Auxiliary input of the amp (or anything but the Phono input). If your sound card doesn't have a Line Out, you can use the Speaker/Headphone output socket, but be very careful to set the volume at a low level on the card itself or in Windows. Connecting leads are available from any electrical retailer.

Several developers (most notably Electronic Arts and NovaLogic) are using Dolby Surround sound – the same system used in television and films – in their games and it sounds great. You don't need a special type of sound card to hear this, but you will need to hook up to a Dolby Surround home cinema amplifier (Richer Sounds on 0500 333 500 do a cheap range) and four or five speakers. However, proper Dolby surround should not be confused with the echo-type effects offered by sound cards with dual speaker outputs or technologies such as DirectSound3D, QSound and A3D, which *simulate* a surround sound effect with a single pair of speakers and don't require any special decoding hardware.

£50 WINNER!

NET VIRGIN

Q This is going to sound like a really stupid question, but how exactly do I set up an Internet game using an IP address? Is it like setting up a modem game except you type in the IP address instead of the phone number? If I sound vague it's because I have no idea what I'm talking about. I bet loads of other people have the same problem as me.

Ben Hibbins, e-mail

A **Well, some might consider it a "stupid question", but it's just won you £50, mate, purely for reminding us that there are probably thousands of people like yourself out there who haven't got a clue how to get started at Internet gaming.**

You don't actually say which game you're trying to play online, but let's assume for now that it's *Quake II*. For this particular game, choose Multiplayer from the main menu options, set up your player profile and then select Join Network Server. Now go to the Address Book, choose a server and, assuming you've activated your Internet connection (just as you would when you surf the Web), you should be playing Deathmatch in a matter of seconds.

But hang on... Your Address Book is empty, right? You haven't got the numbers of any host machines? Well, that's where you need to do a bit of research. A good place to start is www.lithium.com/ quake2/servers.html, a live site (updated every couple of minutes) which offers a large list of servers currently active around the world, along with information such as which map is being played, how many players are competing, ping times (speed) and so on.

Do be aware, however, that most of the servers listed on Lithium (and similar sites) are based overseas and offer you relatively poor speeds. Ideally you want British-based host machines. If you're really lucky your ISP (Internet Service Provider) may run their own server(s) which will offer optimum performance. Call them to find out.

That's really as hard as it gets to set up a game on the Internet. Many game publishers run their own servers which you'll be connected to automatically via a simple-to-use front end within certain titles (check the manual and relevant websites to see if any service is provided). Examples include Blizzard's Battle.Net (used for *Diablo* and *StarCraft*), Westwood Online (*Command & Conquer Gold* and *C&C: Red Alert*) and NovaLogic's NovaWorld (*F-22 Raptor* and *Comanche Gold*). More often than not, servers like these are based in America but can offer reasonable speeds. Then again, of course, you have the UK-based Wireplay service which enables you to play dozens of games online via one easy-to-use interface – see page 164.



A QUICK FAQ

USB under the spotlight

What's this USB lark about?

USB (Universal Serial Bus) is a peripheral standard jointly developed by the likes of Intel, IBM, Microsoft and Compaq. The technology enables you to hook-up multiple devices to your computer – everything from standard control devices like keyboards, mice and joysticks to other stuff such as speakers, modems, floppy drives, hand-held scanners, video cameras and printers – all via one external port on the back of your PC (which looks like a telephone socket).

So what's the big deal?

Well, you can connect up to 127 devices for a start, either by daisy-chaining them or using connection boxes (hubs). So, for example, hooking up four digital joypads is no problem. USB uses plug 'n' play technology so, in theory, you don't need to install special drivers or go through a complex set-up procedure, and you can 'hot-swap' devices without turning off the PC. As USB ports carry a 5V power line, there's no need for external power supplies for stuff like force-feedback joysticks.

When are we likely to see USB used?

Well that's the thing. USB has been around for a while now (in fact, if you bought your PC in the last 12 months you've almost certainly got a pair of USB ports built into it) and there are a few peripherals available. USB technology hasn't taken off until now simply because the original version of Win95 didn't directly support it. Win98 does, however, and manufacturers everywhere are scrambling to get USB devices onto the market. Expect it to get *very* big in the next year or so.

And what's Firewire?

A similar system designed for peripherals that need ultra-high speeds for multimedia and business. In the future, PCs may have USB *and* FireWire (or IEEE 1394) ports, but the latter isn't likely to be used by gamers.



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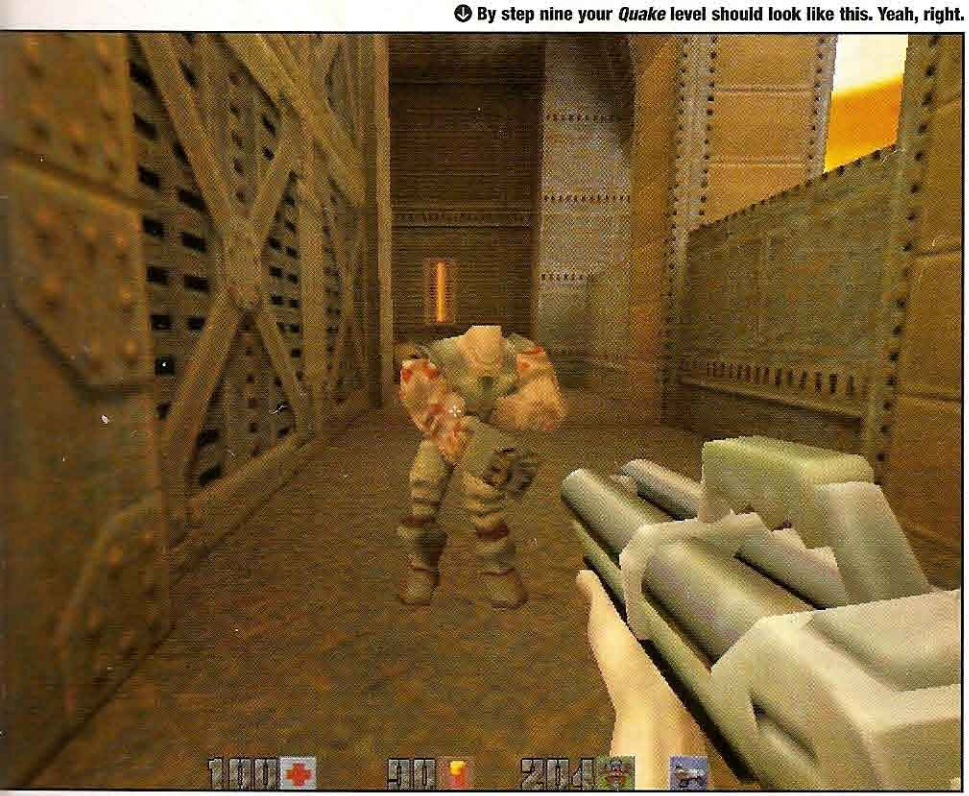
HOW TO... BUILD A QUAKE LEVEL

PART TWO

Last month we showed you what to do on a Sunday, obviously not remembering that Sunday – and, indeed, every single day of the week – would be soaked in World Cup football. But in the gaps between the games, maybe you'll be in just the mood to be shown how you and your 400MHz Pentium II Deathbox™ could... build a *Quake* level

ARCHITECTS: Rodney Burns (aka Deadmeat) and David McCandless

By step nine your *Quake* level should look like this. Yeah, right.



Level design, they say, is where the rubber hits the road. You can have the ultimate 3D games engine, which is able to mip-map, texturise, rasterise, anti-alias, scale, rotate and breakdance in 3D. The games which use it might have the most excruciatingly brilliant animation, a great plot, fantastic atmosphere and more hours of gameplay than God's own self-penned *Quake*-clone. But when you start playing, if the levels suck, the game will suck also.

So create your own levels – there's no good reason not to. You have the machine (if your box can play games, it can design levels). You have the software, because it's mostly free. You have the game, because everyone's got a copy of *Quake*. You have the opportunity, because all 3D games are fitted with open architecture which enables you to change any aspect of any element of any part of a level. And you will pretty soon have the know-how, because we're going to give it to you.

JARGON

BRUSH A solid shape in a 3D game, be it box, crate, wall or rock. A room starts off as a single solid brush, which when hollowed out becomes six brushes, one for each wall. The concept of brushes spans every 3D game – be it *Hexen*, *Quake*, *Unreal* or *3D Monster Maze* on the ZX81 – so get your head around the idea.

ENTITIES Objects in the game. Monsters, ammo crates, health kits, lights, start position – basically, anything that isn't a brush.

TEXTURES Now you really are being thick. Textures are the pretty graphics and patterns painted (or 'mapped') onto brushes to make them look real. Hence, texture-mapping.

MAP A level. A closed environment.

CARVING Slicing off parts of a brush to form another shape. For example, you would carve the top of a door to make it an arch, or a hole in a ceiling to make the lights from the sky fall in.

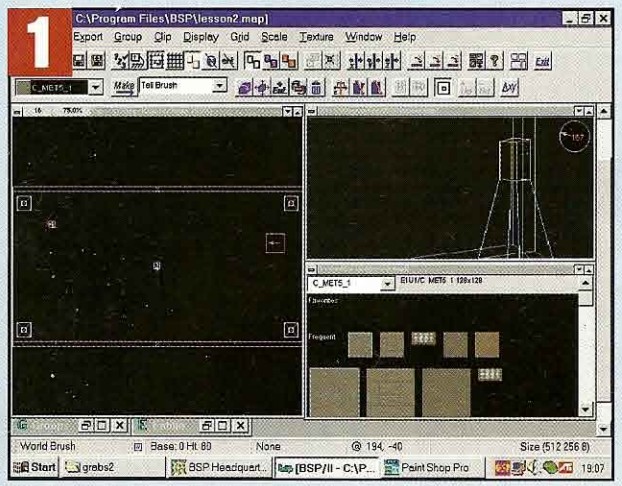
MASTURBATION Oh please, now you really are being a dumbass.

WALKTHROUGH: A QUAKE LEVEL IN 12 STEPS

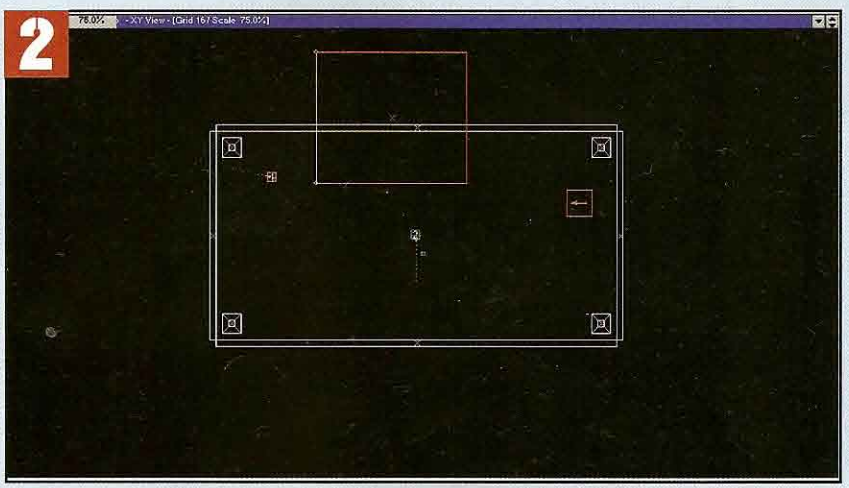
*quite hard



Last month we left you stranded in a basic first room, with no doors or windows. Ahhhh, diddums. Incidentally, we're using BSP, a freeware editor of some talent, but basic concepts and techniques are common across the slew of 3D shooters which now grace our shop shelves. This time we'll start the monsters going, put some skill lighting in place, and see the sky for the first time.



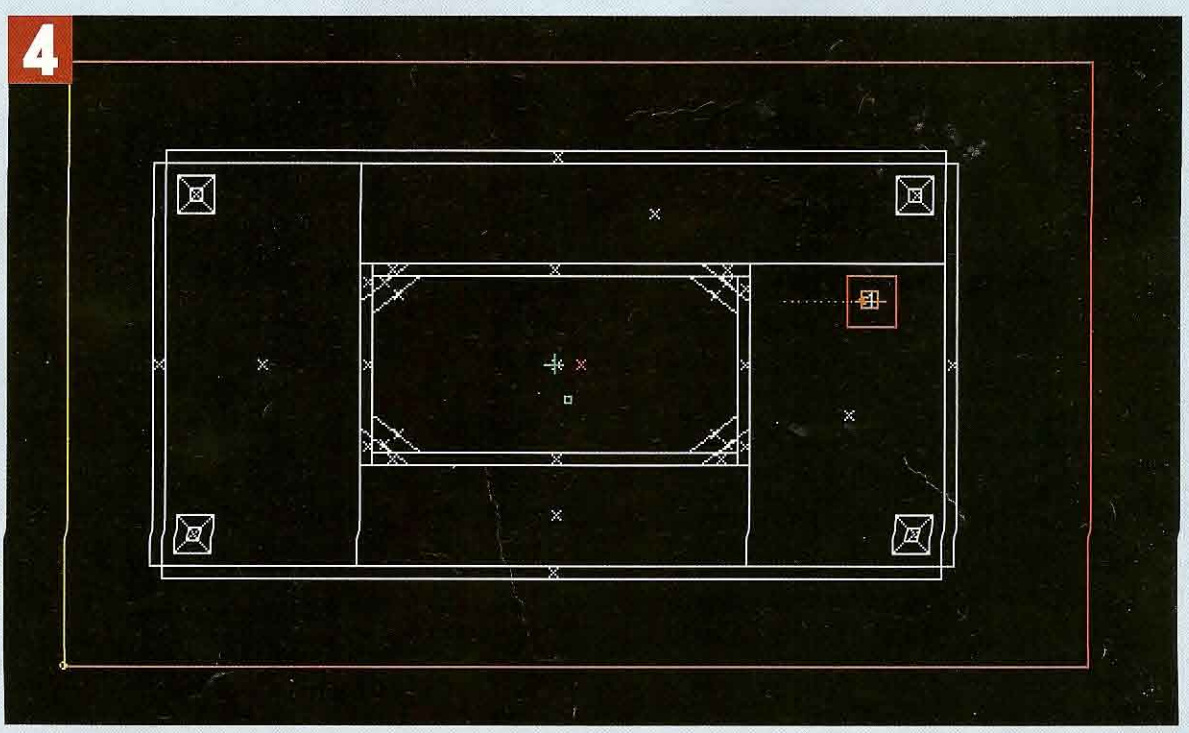
1 To recap on last week. Build a room 512 units across by 256 down. Raise the roof. Texture the walls with something sensible. Set a start point for the player and make sure it isn't buried in the floor. Build a couple of stands (as per the screenshot) and stick lights on top of them. Save, render and play... for the 30 seconds it takes you to play a small room with four small candles in it.



2 Last time we dealt with brush carving. Now we're going to have a go at the opposite – subtraction (or "cutting a hole in a brush" for the layman). Stick your editor in top view and draw a square brush from (-128,64) to (128, -64). Switch to a front view and drag the top of the brush to 144 and the bottom to 120 to make the shape stick through the ceiling. This brush is going to make a metal border around a newly fashioned skylight.

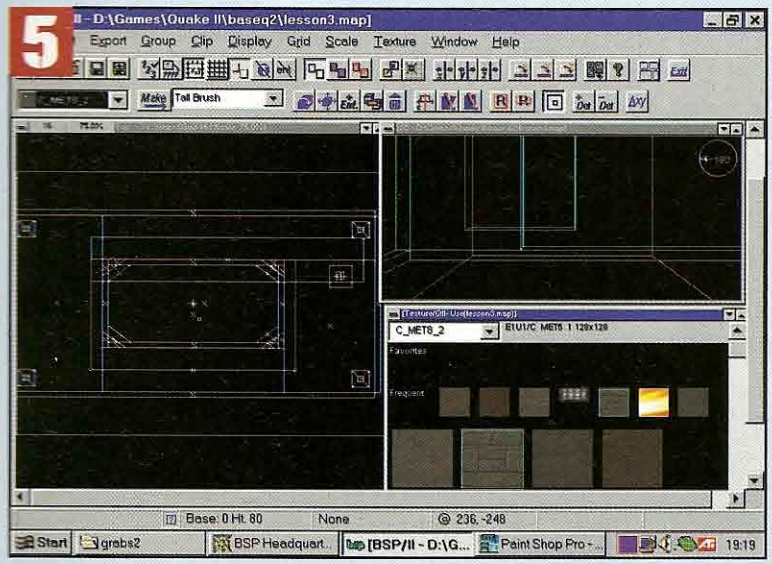


3 Add the texture FLORR1_6 and clip off the corners of your new brush. In the top view, clip from (-128, 40) to (-96, 64), from (96,64) to (128,40), (128, -40) to (96,-64) *and (-96,-64) to (128, -40).* Once done, click on the Subtract button to remove the shape from the ceiling brush.

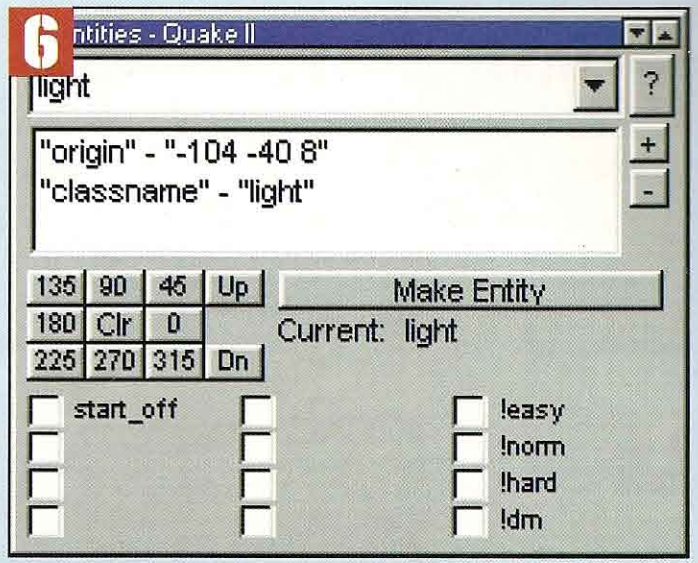


4 Now we need to make a sky – and that, as I'm sure you've guessed already, is another brush. Hit ESC to deselect the skylight, then draw a new one from (-120, 56) to (120, -56) and clip off the corners as you did with the hole in the ceiling. Switch to front view and drag the sky brush to 160. Apple the texture SKY1 and then click Subtract to cut a hole.

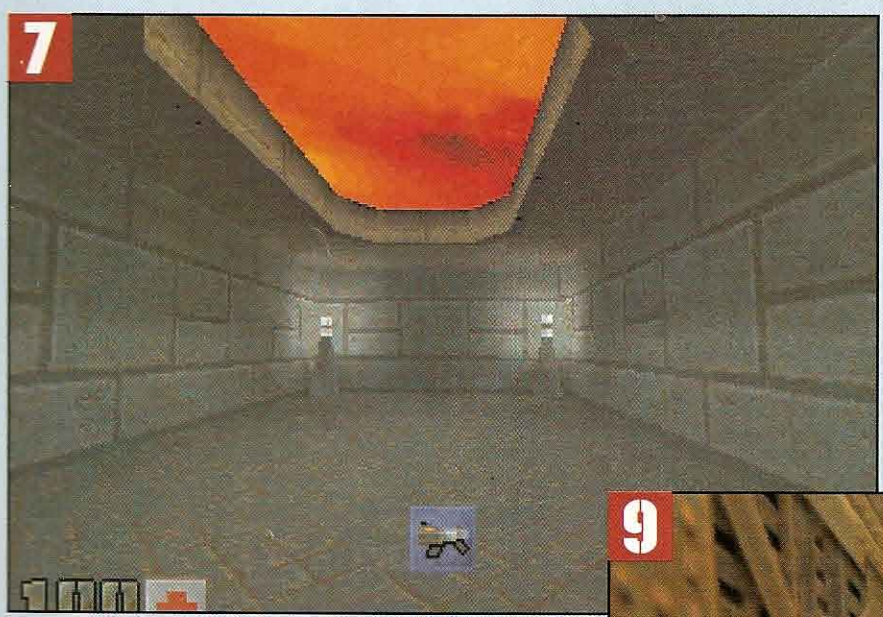
WALKTHROUGH CONTINUES OVER



5 Once the sky has been subtracted, move the bottom of the brush up to 144 so the sky is above the window. We could delete the brush altogether if we chose to. We have that power. That would be handy if we wanted a hole in the ceiling leading to a room above. But we don't want that. So we shan't.

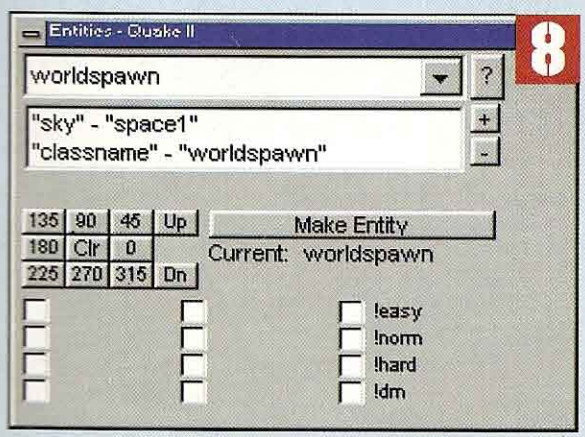


6 Okay, okay, halfway there. We now need a light source in the window to get some realism going. Hit S to bring up the Surface window, then click on Light and add a value of 300. Click on Apply to make the light texture radiate illumination over the whole scene. We could've created a light and placed it in the sky, but this method gives even distribution.

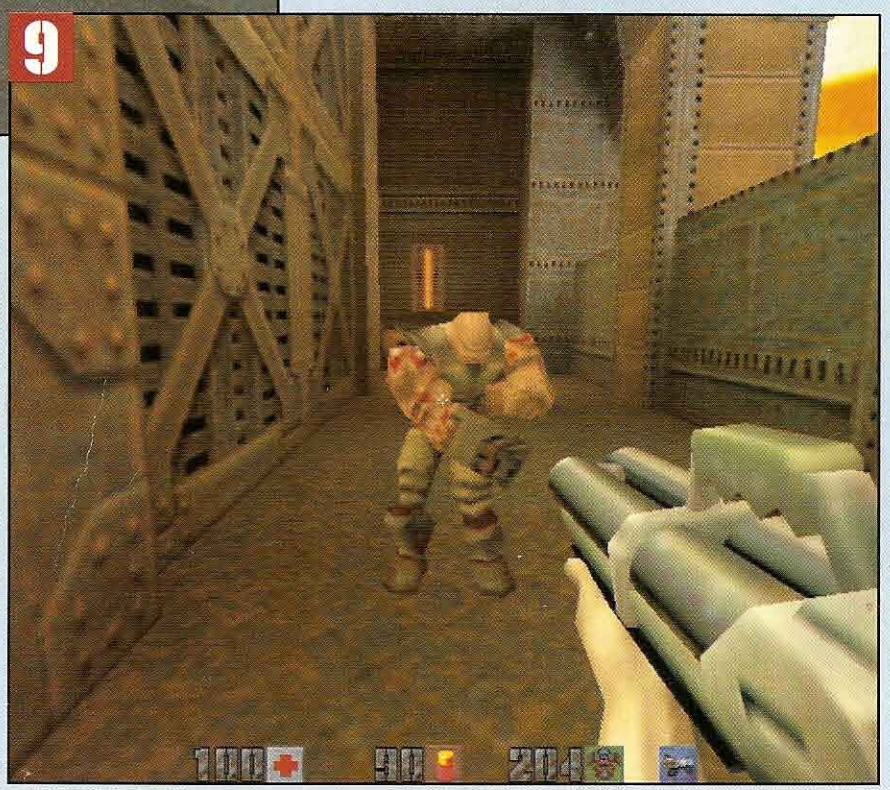


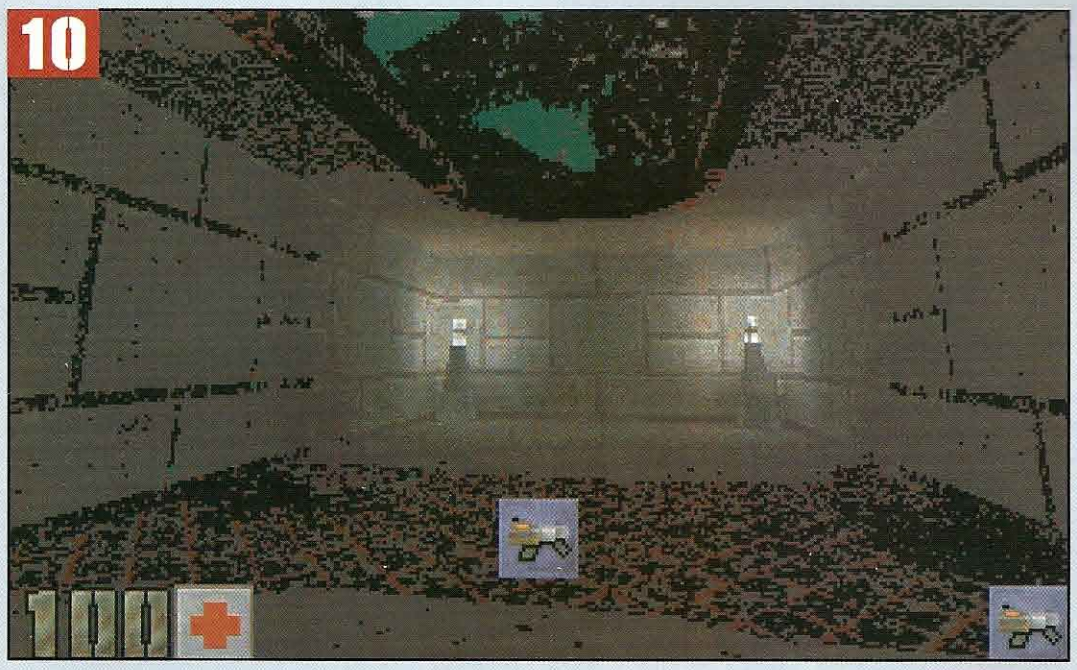
7 Hey – here's an idea. Why not take a look at your level? Export FULL and take a good look round. Check out that sky – nice, huh? Also note, Sherlock, that the centre of the room is lighter, with a dark shadow around the rim of the window. Not bad though, huh? (Look, when you design levels for American 3D shoot 'em ups you gotta start talking like an American, OK?)

9 Time for a monstie. Draw a new brush from (-192,16) to (-160,-16). Now switch to the Entity window and make this brush into a monster_infantry entity. This creates an Enforcer. Click the 0 button to make him face due east, and then check the !hard and !dm boxes. This will stop the little blaggard from appearing in hard skill level games and in deathmatches. Make sure that yer boy is positioned on the floor (no, in it) and you're done.



8 Okay, now let's change the sky. This is a slightly tricky manoeuvre. Deselect all brushes and bring up the Entity window. Click on + and enter key value of sky space1 then click OK. Now the sky is starry (you may want to remove the light if you stick with this option). There are 10 different sky textures in *Quake II*, from Unit1 to Unit9. Remember that the texture map is 3D so will wrap around the entire level.

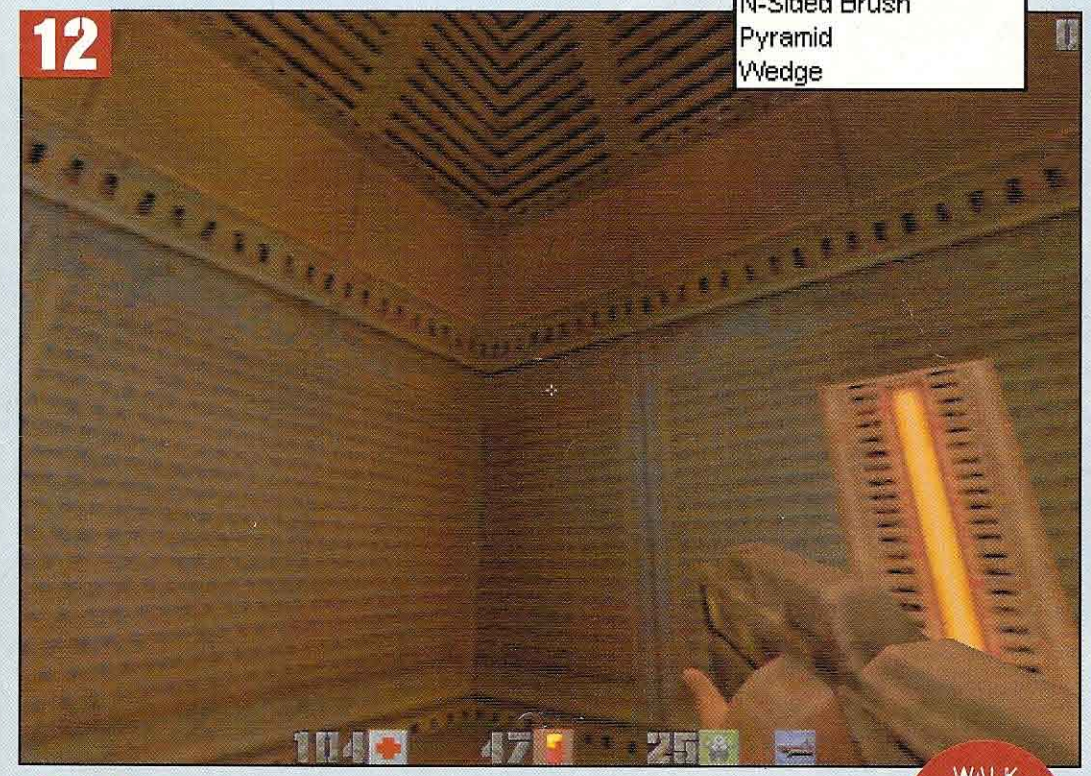




10 ↑ Create another small brush next to your Enforcer and, via the Entity box, label this one as a monster_gunner. Now you yourself got a tough guy. Uncheck the !hard box and check the rest. When you render your level you should see an Enforcer standing in front of you. Let it kill you, then bring down the console and type skill 2 and restart the map. Now, instead of an Enforcer, there should be a Gunner. Same map, different difficulty level.

11 → Extra room, extra room. Draw a new brush from (-912, 256) to (-272, -320). In a side view, drag the floor to 0 and the ceiling to 256. Give it a texture (for example, DAMAGE1_1). To stretch the texture vertically to fit the wall, add 2.0 in the SY box in the Surface window. Apply the texture, select Room from the drop-down menu and click on the Make button. Voilà. Add some roof and ceiling textures to the brush and you have another room.





12 ↑ In top view, drag a new brush from (288, 64) to (-240, -64). Make the floor at 0 and the ceiling at 128. Subtract it and delete it to create an opening between the two rooms. Select the brushes which make up the inside of the door-to-be, and use FLOOR3_3 for the ground and C_MET8_2 for the other faces (use ALT-F to apply a texture to an individual face). Done.

WALK THROUGH END

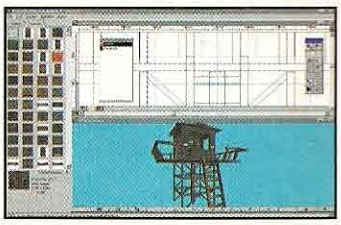
LEVEL EDITORS

There are many editors available commercially or on the Internet which offer you a good introduction to the intricacies of level editing. Some of them are poo. Some are great. Some are complicated. Some Helen Keller could use. Here they are for quick reference

DEATHMATCH MAKER II

Virtus • www.virtus.com

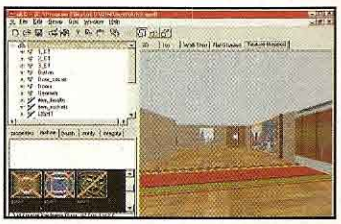
Enables you to paint the walls in 3D view, and has loads of prefab shapes, but is let down by a tricky control system, a terrible texture browser, and the fact that it only works with *Quake II*.



QED 2.0

3D Matrix/GT Interactive • www.3dmatrix.com

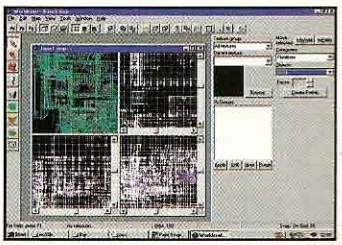
Technically an 'amateur' invention, qED is extremely powerful, with a well-designed interface and a proper hierarchy. But it is difficult for beginners and has dodgy texture management.



WORLDCRAFT 1.6

Valve Software • www.worldcraft.com

As used to make *Half-Life*. Loads of prefabs, loads of features and you can import your own textures. Good browser, but null points for the manual.



BSP 0.93B

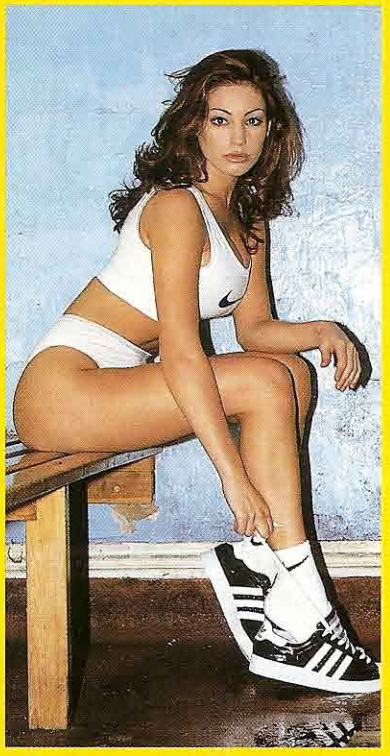
Shareware • www.bsphq.com

Highly regarded editor with massive online support, easy interface and features, features, features. It's a bit tricky to set up and install, but comes highly recommended.



Stuff

GREAT GEAR FOR MEN

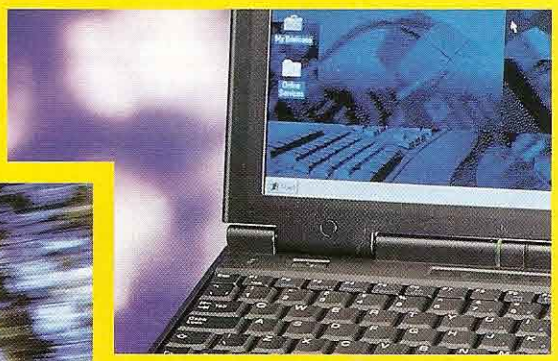






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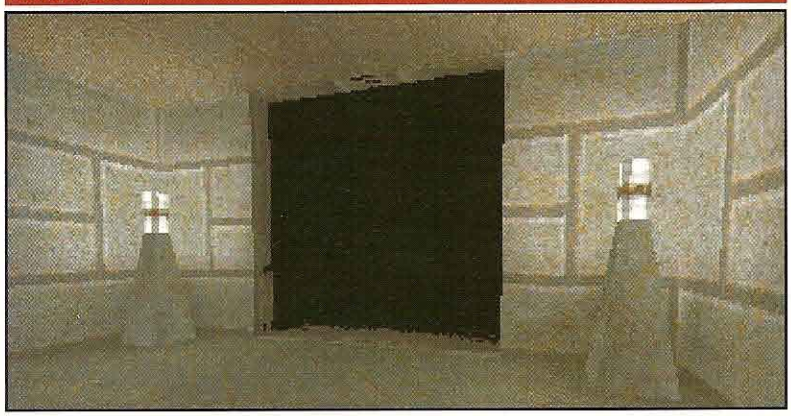




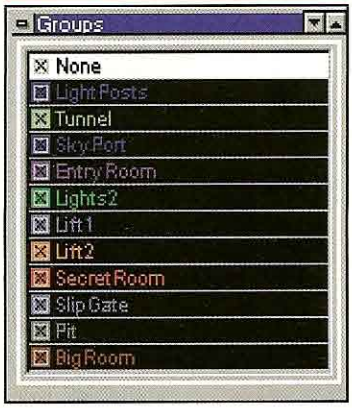
NEW ISSUE

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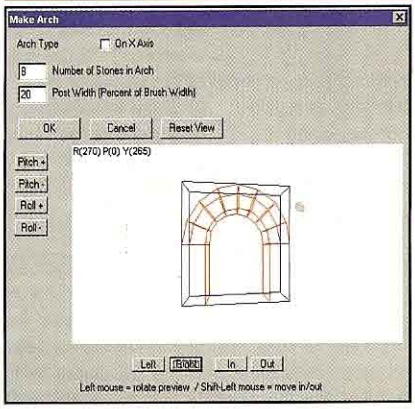
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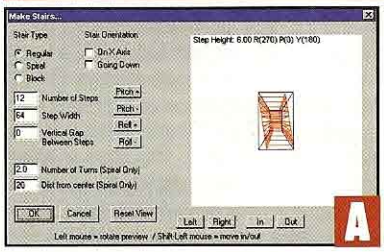
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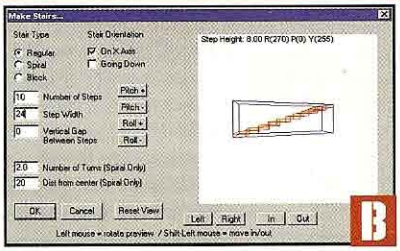


3 PREFABS

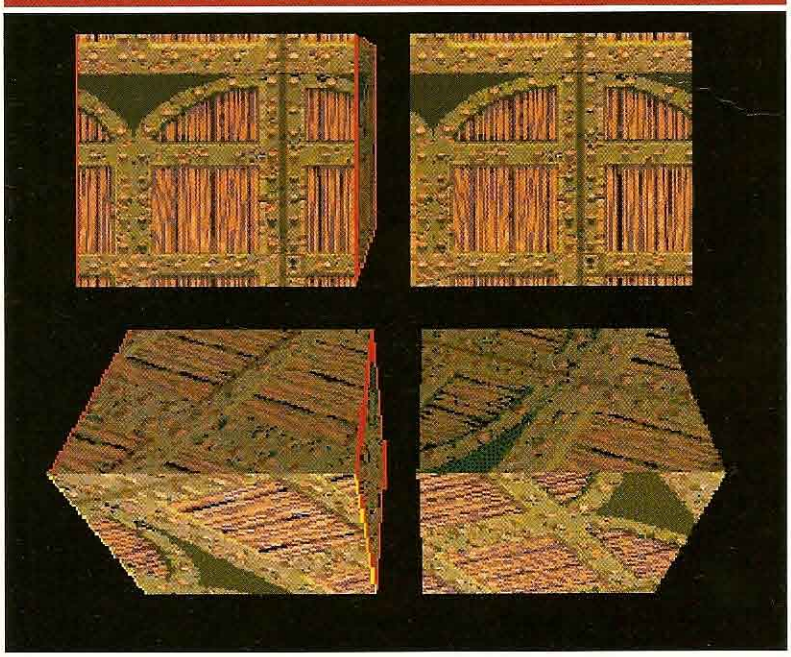


4 STAIRS





5 ADVANCED TEXTURE MANIPULATION



TRICKS AND COOL BITS

Of course, you can build all the levels you want and they may all be pretty good. But what makes a level great is that tiny spark of genius which just raises your level above everyone else's. A little trick, a small stunt, or just an original implementation of a basic feature. Here are some choice techniques...

1. DOOR

Make two brushes to represent each side of the door. Draw one from (-268, 64) to (-260,0) and make it 128 units high. Apply GRNMT1_1. Copy the brush and move it to the other side of your gap (you have created a space for your door, haven't you?). Select one brush, switch to the Entity window and turn it into func_door. While you're here, set the angle to 270 degrees, and assign a sounds 2 key/value pair to your door. Repeat the process for the other brush, but set the angle to 90 degrees. Now you have a door. A nice new door.

2. GROUPS

The larger your map gets, the more difficult it becomes to select certain parts of it. Also, in the 3D view, BSP spends an enormous amount of time drawing and rendering the expanses of your level and not enough time letting you do the designing. Selecting groups can alleviate this situation. In wireframe view, select all the brushes which make up a certain area. Switch to the Group window and select Add New Group. Give your section a name. Now select your group from the Group list. Right-click and select Invisible. The section disappears from the map, allowing you to forge ahead.

3. PREFABS

In BSP, the editor can make 14 different objects for you, from individual brushes and lights to entire rooms and staircases. With these pre-built elements it's piss-easy to create something like an arch: simply draw a brush roughly the size and shape you want your arch to be (say, 128x24 by 128 units high). This will act as a bounding box to surround your arch. Choose a texture, apply it and click on the Arch button. Additionally, you can select all the brushes which make up your arch and choose Save Brushes under the Brush sub-menu. Now you can use the same arch whenever you want.

4. STAIRS

A. First build a brush that approximates the size and shape of the staircase you're imagining. Let's say we want ten steps, with a tread depth of 24 units. Each step should be eight units high and 48 units wide, and the stairs will run along the x-axis. So the X-size of the brush needs to be 240 (ten steps at 24 depth). The Y-size will be 48 (the width of the stairs) and the Z-dimension will be 80 (ten steps, each eight units high). Draw an appropriate box, ensuring the bottom of the brush is flush with the floor of the room (you don't want a staircase floating in mid-air).

B. Texture your steps with whatever sensible texture you've chosen and then click on the Stair button. Click the On_X_axis checkbox to rotate the steps in the right direction (for a better view, manually rotate the preview using the control buttons). You can choose either regular, spiral or block stairs (block steps extend the full length of the brush so there's no space underneath). Choose regular. Type 10 into the Number of Steps box, 24 into Step Width, and so on. Click Okay when you're done. Finito.

5. ADVANCED TEXTURE MANIPULATION

A quick lesson in how to align textures the easy way. Make two rectangular brushes side by side, slightly apart. The textures you use don't matter, just make it something which stands out. Switch to the 3D window and turn on texture rendering. Left-click on a brush to select it. The face you click on becomes the currently selected face (outlined in yellow as opposed to red). Shift-left-click and hold while you move the mouse around. The texture drags around with the movement of the mouse.

CTRL-left-clicking and dragging the mouse stretches the texture and updates the SX and SY values, thus stretching (a value greater than 1.0) or compressing (less than 1.0) a texture. This enables you to make a texture fit a brush that may not be quite as big as the texture you are applying. If you want to flip a texture so that it is reversed, simply stretch it to a -1.0 value. CTRL-Shift-left-click and drag will then rotate the texture. The rotation value (R) is displayed in the status bar as you drag.

WATCHDOG

Your consumer woes, gripes and complaints. *PC Zone* takes them to the industry to pluck a solution straight from the horse's mouth. So to speak

"Why do we put up with such poor service in the computer industry? In no other industry would this be acceptable"

ANSWERED BY Adam Phillips

LIVING IN A WORLD O' HURT?

We're here to help. If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing, drop us a line.

WRITE TO Watchdog, *PC Zone*, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.

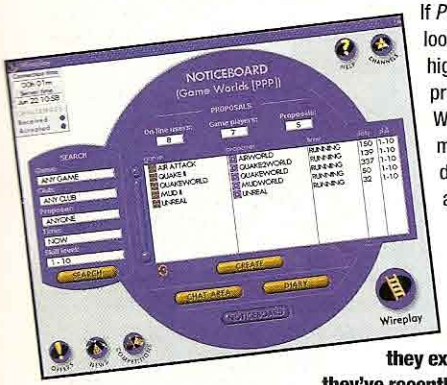
E-MAIL E-mail us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading **'Watchdog'.**

ONLINE GAMING

Q I read in *PC Zone* about the glory of online gaming with Wireplay. I don't have a problem with their rapid-play service, but I do with their *Quake* and *Quake II* gamesworlds. I have suffered high ping rates and endless login retries trying to get onto them. Almost every night I'm on the helpline trying to get some help to improve my *Quake* connection – it's gotten to the point where they recognise my voice!

If *PC Zone* could look into and highlight the problems with Wireplay, then maybe they would do something about it.

Wilson Briggs



Wireplay have moved their server site to London in an effort to improve capacity.

A *PC Zone* spoke to the bods at Wireplay and they explained that they've recently moved their server site to London in order to improve capacity and performance. Because of this, some customers have experienced what Wireplay call "teething problems". Wireplay do point out that they sent several e-mails to customers warning them of any potential problems, and posted constant news updates via Quake News. By the time you read this, the system should be back to normal. If not, make sure you drop us another line.

TRY LATER

Q I thought I'd better warn your readers to beware of the new expansion disk, *Total Annihilation: Core Contingency*. It looks as though there are hundreds of badly copied disks in the UK and Scandinavia. Complaints on the Internet are everywhere.

The only response from developers Cavedog was to give me a hotline number to ring. When I did, they said they would add my problem to their database and get back to me in a few weeks! I said that was very poor customer support and not good enough. Their reply was: "Sorry, but there's no alternative."

Why do we put up with such poor service in the computer industry? In no other industry would this be acceptable.

The worse thing about all this is that the readme file contains documentation of the error we're experiencing, so they knew about the problem when the game shipped. It blames the error on DirectX, but everyone – including me – has reinstalled DirectX and it makes no difference.

I'm convinced the disks are all bad copies, as the installation routine finishes at about 80 per cent complete, with no messages. It crashes for everyone about 80 per cent through loading units on the front-end screen.

Also, the original *Total Annihilation* doesn't work unless it is reinstalled.

Phil Billington

A *TA:CC*'s distributors, GT Interactive, told *PC Zone* that the problems with the expansion disk were down to a disk duplication error, and not the software itself. All faulty disks have been withdrawn from sale, and any customers still experiencing problems should call Charles Kay on 0171 565 7300.

As for the distinctly limp customer care you received, GT Interactive insist that yours is an isolated case and they do apologise for the treatment you received. We'd like to hear from anyone else if this isn't the case.

"It's possible to order a game from the US and have it arrive weeks before the game is out in the UK. What gives?"

BLOODY FRENCH!

Q I'd like to know what GT Interactive think they're playing at. For the second time in the last couple of months they've delayed the UK release of an eagerly awaited title for no discernible reason. I am referring to *Unreal* and *Total Annihilation: Core Contingency*. The US versions of these games hit the streets three weeks earlier than their UK counterparts.

What gives? GT Interactive seem to be inviting pirates to steal their business. It is possible to order a game from the US from a company like Electronic Boutique's **ebworld.com** site and have it arrive weeks before the game is out in the UK, giving the pirates ample time to duplicate boxes, manuals, CDs, etc.

There is no language problem, so I would expect the game that ships in the US to be identical to the one which ships in the UK. Other companies manage simultaneous releases, so why not GT?

With the growth of large companies like GT distributing games for many software houses, I would imagine a lot of readers of *PC Zone* would like to know why some companies feel that they can treat UK gamers like second-class citizens.

Mark Wood

A Back to GT Interactive: "GTI are a global organisation, and as such always aim to achieve simultaneous release dates in all territories. Unfortunately, due to various issues, such as translation timings and the fact that Europe is comprised of many small territories all with differing needs, this cannot always be achieved."

Doesn't it feel great to be part of a united Europe?

PAY-AS-YOU-PLAY WIREPLAY WOES

Q After reading the Wireplay section of issue 64, I noticed that you mentioned that it's possible to use BT's discount schemes – such as Friends & Family – with Wireplay. As I use Wireplay on the pay-as-you-play option, I decided to put Wireplay on the Friends & Family list. I phoned BT twice only to be told that it's not possible to use the discount scheme with Wireplay. Is your info wrong, or is BT trying to scam yet more money out me?

Robin Moore

A Apologies for not making ourselves clear. If you subscribe to Wireplay, you can slap the number on to the Friends & Family *and* Best Friend discount schemes. For a subscription to Gameworlds, call 0845 6025483. For Rapid Play, call 0845 6036030. The bad news is that if you're a pay-as-you-play user you can't. Wireplay told us that this is down to their "pricing structure". If you're not happy, call Cable And Wireless on 0500 500 500 and ask them if they can offer a better deal.

ANOTHER PATCH BITES THE DUST



Q I bought a copy of your magazine with the "latest" version of the *Quake II* patch (3.14) on the CD, which I have yet to install. I then looked on the Internet where I discovered that there was a 3.15 patch "just out". Fairly miffed at this, I played online a couple of times, only to find that I could not get on to some of the servers. In the evening, I then looked again on the Internet, only to discover that a 3.16 patch was soon to be released due to bugs in the 3.15 release! I mean, three new patches in the space of a day is pretty incredible. Will it ever end?

Robin Kilpatrick

A That's the only problem with being a monthly magazine – the world of online gaming changes at such a rapid rate that it's impossible to keep you up to date on a daily basis. In the meantime, look on our cover CD for the 3.15 patch. Those of you who've not upgraded at all can also find a relevant version of the 3.15 patch on there as well.

As for your problems logging in: as you probably suspect, it's because all the servers are upgraded with the latest patch, making it impossible for you to join the game.

Activision have apologised for the inconvenience and assured us that after patch 3.16 there aren't any more upgrades planned – for the time being at least.

TA: Core Contingent *is reviewed on page 109 and there's a demo on this month's CD.*

DRIVEN TO TEARS

Q After reading about Zye Technology's F1 SIM steering wheel in *PC Zone*, I decided that I had to get one. So in early February I set out to Oxford city centre but was unable to locate the hardware at any of the major stores. I tried again the following week, but again without any luck.

By March I decided to try the mail-order companies. From Leeds to London, I still had no joy. I then called Zye Technology and they were surprised to hear that I was having such difficulties. They then kindly gave me the numbers of several other mail-order companies to try.

Still my search for the elusive steering wheel was unsuccessful. I called Zye again and they kindly offered to track one down for me, and located one at PC World in Slough. On picking it up from the store and taking it home, I discovered that the gear-shift accelerator was broken!

Instead of returning to PC World (they'd have been out of stock), I called Zye again, asking if I could post the broken one to them and then have a new one sent to me once new stock arrived. They agreed. I also asked if I could keep hold of the wheel while they waited for the new stock – the wheel was still usable apart from the broken gear-shift. Again Zye agreed. This is when the problems began.

Days passed with no sign of a replacement. No effort was made to contact me with a progress report. At the end of March I was finally told that new stock had arrived and I repackaged the wheel and sent it off.

A week passed and nothing happened. I called Zye and was told that they were out of stock again, the Zye employee telling me: "These things go quite quickly." You can imagine my response.

I was then told that more stock would be arriving the following Tuesday and a replacement would be sent out. It arrived on May 13 without any form of apology or explanation.

I then discovered that the base board was heavily chipped and scratched, and believed that the wheel had been used by somebody else before being sent to me. I complained and was sent a replacement board, again without any form of apology.

Unfortunately, there's now yet another problem – the base board comes in two halves which must be joined together with a wooden peg at one end, and a small metal plate that is screwed in at the other. But the holes have not been drilled for the wooden peg so I'm unable to join the two halves together, and therefore can't use the wheel!

Any help would be appreciated.

Marcus MacLennan

A ***PC Zone*** **forwarded your letter on to Zye Technology for an explanation of the rather horrific problems you've been having. First of all, your difficulties in finding the F1 SIM in the first place were brought about by the release of two new versions of the steering wheel – the F1 SIM Compact, which is a cheaper, scaled-down version of the one you were chasing, and the compact version bundled with** ***Formula 1 '97*****, again retailing for less. These two new versions sold better, and subsequently dealers focused on stocking them rather than the original F1 SIM. Zye Technology are in the process of addressing this problem.**

As for your subsequent treatment by Zye, Ben Perrin, a spokesman for the company, offers the following: "The service delivered fell well below our usual high standards. However, the usual procedure for returning faulty products is via the retailer, where we have pre-set arrangements for handling this type of issue. Clearly we tried to bypass this, and as a result made heavy work of it."

The bottom line is that Zye Technology apologise for the inconvenience caused, and you should by now have received a brand-new F1 SIM steering wheel (without scratch marks), plus complimentary copies of ***Grand Prix 2*** **and** ***Formula 1 '97*** **as a gesture of goodwill.**

As they say in the business: a result.



The F1 SIM Compact has taken over as the leading steering wheel, as Marcus discovered to his cost.

PC ZONE

COMING NEXT MONTH

That's right, we're doing it all again next month. Make sure you don't miss this healthy offering...

F1 SIMS SUPERTEST

Thinking of buying an F1 sim? Make sure you check out next month's mammoth F1 Sim Supertest

HOW TO...

PLAY ONLINE GAMES

Want to play online games but not quite sure how to get started? Then don't miss our beginner's guide

PLUS:

TONS OF REVIEWS

Over 40 reviews of the latest and greatest PC games, including a round-up of the new budget offerings and a look at the 100 best PC games of all time. And, fingers crossed, we should have reviews of all these top titles...

DOMINION
DUNE 2000
SiN
WARGAMES
X-FILES
AND LOADS MORE

PLUS:

CHEATS AND TIPS TO ANOTHER 20 TOP GAMES. INCLUDING...
A HELPFUL GUIDE TO GETTING THE MOST OUT OF X-COM INTERCEPTOR
A WALKTHROUGH TO THE AWESOME DEATHTRAP DUNGEON

PLUS:

OBSESSED WITH LARA

If you think you're addicted to *Tomb Raider* just see what lengths some readers will go to in order to get closer to Lara Croft

ON SALE THURSDAY 6 AUGUST

PCZ TOP 100

Welcome to the PC Zone Top 100. Here you'll find the games that in our expert opinion are the current top PC games in their field, as well as a few extras you might like to consider if you're a big fan of the genre.

ACTION GAMES



QUAKE II — PCZ #59 • 97%

✪ The sequel to 'the most important PC game ever' turns out to be more than worth the wait. Despite the odd bit of slowdown, single-player and deathmatch games are in a league of their own. As Macca concluded in his review: "*Quake II* is pretty much perfect." Buy it now.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



JEDI KNIGHT: DARK FORCES II — PCZ #55 • 94%

✪ It's not *Quake,* but then it doesn't even try to be. But it is a compelling, technically superb blend of action and exploration neatly wrapped up in the *Star Wars* universe. Altogether most impressive.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/VIE • 0171 368 2255



FADE TO BLACK — PCZ #31 • 94%

✪ The unofficial sequel to the excellent *Flashback,* this is a near-perfect blend of third-person exploration and combat action. The technical precursor to the fantastic *Tomb Raider,* it's a classic in its own right.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



PRIVATEER 2: THE DARKENING — PCZ #44 • 94%

✪ The ultimate mix of space combat, *Elite*-style trading and FMV action, *Privateer 2* was the first big budget release from Origin which used live action in a positive way. Absolutely packed with stars, this is pukka stuff.

PUBLISHER Origin/EA • 01753 549442



TIE FIGHTER — PCZ #18 • 94%

✪ *TIE Fighter* is still rated by many as the finest space combat sim ever to be released. It succeeds because it successfully blends all the kudos of *Star Wars* with a wicked new engine for super-fast TIE on X-Wing fisticuffs.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/VIE • 0171 368 2255



TOMB RAIDER II — PCZ #57 • 94%

✪ The first game broke the mould, but the sequel even improves on the original. *Tomb Raider II* sports a curvier Lara, massive new levels to explore and a tidier control system. The game comes with native 3Dfx support and looks better than ever.

PUBLISHER Core/Eidos • 0181 636 3000



FORSAKEN — PCZ #63 • 94%

✪ *Descent* is dead and *Forsaken* is now king of the tunnel-based shoot 'em ups. With huge, varied levels, heaps of graphical effects, weapons and a fantastic multiplayer LAN-based game, it's up there with the best of 'em.

PUBLISHER Acclaim • 0171 344 5000



DUKE NUKEM 3D — PCZ #40 • 93%

✪ The debate rages on, and there are still a lot of people who rate *Duke* over *Quake.* It's not as technically impressive, but brags gameplay by the bucketload in one-player mode and when played over a network.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000



UNREAL — PCZ #65 • 93%

NEW ENTRY A potential *Quake II* killer that didn't quite live up to expectations. It boasts atmosphere, incredible graphics, an unfolding storyline, great level design, a level editor, but the weapons lack 'oomph' and deathmatch can be lame.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791



INCOMING — PCZ #63 • 90%

✪ Rage's awesome all-action arcade epic is quite possibly the best-looking action game we've seen this year. If you've got the hardware and want to get your hands on non-stop action and a dose of strategy, this is a must-buy.

PUBLISHER Rage • 0121 452 8400

ALSO CONSIDER

QUAKE Activision • PCZ #43 • 96%
TOMB RAIDER Eidos • PCZ #45 • 95%
SPEC OPS: RANGERS ASSAULT Take 2 • PCZ #65 • 88%
JEDI KNIGHT: MYSTERIES OF THE SITH LucasArts • PCZ #62 • 95%
MDK Interplay • PCZ #50 • 90%
LAST BRONX Sega • PCZ #62 • 87%
MAGIC CARPET II Electronic Arts• PCZ #32 • 92%
HEXEN II Activision • PCZ #54 • 94%

DRIVING GAMES



CARMAGEDDON — PCZ #50 • 95%

✪ Awesome arcade-style racer that's heavy on the hit 'n' run and gameplay. Loads of different cars to choose from, plenty of tracks, three ways to play and a fab multiplayer network mode make this one of the most entertaining driving games ever.

PUBLISHER SCI • 0171 585 3308



FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX 2 — PCZ #36 • 95%

✪ The amazing sequel to the greatest F1 driving sim ever. Updated brilliantly for the 94/95 season with all-new detailed circuits, cars and teams. Will run on a 486DX2 but you'll need a Pentium to run the hi-res mode.

PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893



NETWORK Q RAC RALLY — PCZ #44 • 94%

✪ The seminal rally racer from Europress is the ultimate in skiddy, slidey action. 27 (count 'em) stages, loads of cars, a fantastic eight-way network option and varied terrain and conditions make this superior to the limited *Sega Rally*. Go buy it!

PUBLISHER Europress Software • 01625 859444



F1 RACING SIMULATION — PCZ #59 • 93%

✪ The sheer depth of realism is what makes *F1 Racing Sim* such an outstanding experience to play. Not only that, but it looks an absolute treat too – especially 3Dfx-ed up. Ubi Soft practically sprung up from nowhere and took the lead from the established names in the genre.

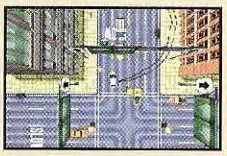
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 0181 944 9000



NASCAR RACING 2 — PCZ #46 • 92%

✪ A worthy upgrade featuring a new, smoother 3D engine, improved opponent AI, more controllable cars, a simple single-screen car set-up and a multiplayer network option. The constant stream of headset messages adds atmosphere. A racing sim fan's must.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



GRAND THEFT AUTO — PCZ #58 • 92%

✪ This is the game that took over from *Carmageddon* as the media's favourite pet hate. Steal cars, dodge police, mow down pedestrians and cause mayhem in city streets in one of the most addictive driving games ever. *Micro Machines* on acid.

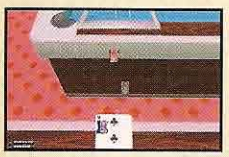
PUBLISHER BMG • 0171 973 0011



F1 97 — PCZ #62 • 92%

✪ The long-awaited sequel to the excellent PlayStation conversion proved to be worth the wait, with improved driver AI, lusher graphics, a split-screen mode and more ludicrous commentary from Murray Walker. Fantastic.

PUBLISHER Psygnosis • 0151 282 3000



MICRO MACHINES 3 — PCZ #64 • 90%

✪ The manic miniature racing game gets the 3D treatment and loses nothing along the way. The new power-ups might not please the purist, but *Micro Machines 3* is still one of the finest two-player games around.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



MOTORHEAD — PCZ #63 • 90%

✪ With drop-dead graphics and a blistering frame rate, this is a ridiculously fast, fab-looking, intense racing experience. Add a great LAN-based option (Local Area Network) and *Motorhead* is the ace of arcade racers.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 2738601



ULTIM@TE RACE PRO — PCZ #62 • 88%

✪ This is quite possibly one of the slickest arcade racers we've ever seen. The handling of the cars might be a little erratic, but the game itself is tremendous fun, especially when you play in deathmatch mode over a LAN.

PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893

ALSO CONSIDER

✪ **Thinking of adding a Formula One game to your collection? Check out our round-up next issue, on sale Thursday 6 August.**

INDYCAR 2 Cendant • PCZ #34 • 90%
SCREAMER 2 Virgin • PCZ #45 • 93%
DESTRUCTION DERBY 2 Psygnosis • PCZ #46 • 86%
INTERSTATE 76: NITRO RIDERS Activision • PCZ #63 • 87%
TOCA: TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP Europress • PCZ #59 • 86%

SPORTS GAMES



LINKS LS — PCZ #43 • 94%

✪ The classic golf sim gets an update, and unsurprisingly it's fab. There's more options, luscious graphics, a redesigned menu and a view selection system. There's even a built-in upgrader for all the old data disk courses you splashed out on.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000



NHL 98 — PCZ #57 • 94%

✪ Another year, another *NHL*, but this one isn't just the best ice hockey game, it's one of the best sports games we've ever seen. Super 3Dfx-ed graphics, fantastic animation and awesome presentation make this a sports title not to be missed.

PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442



PGA TOUR PRO — PCZ #55 • 94%

✪ Nothing really distinguishes this version from the last, except for the brilliant and very easy to use Internet play facility. Waste no time, go and thwack some Americans right now. Remember: your country needs you.

PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442



PETE SAMPRAS TENNIS 97 — PCZ #53 • 92%

✪ This game doesn't quite better *Super Tennis* on the SNES, but it's as close as you'll get on the PC. The simple control system means it's instantly playable, but we may as well tell you now that the women's skirts still don't fly up when they serve.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



PRO PINBALL: TIMESHOCK! — PCZ #53 • 91%

✪ Remember *Pro Pinball: The Web*? This, the second table in the series, is better in every way. Improved ball dynamics, detail and sound effects, and of course there's the return of the world's dirtiest computer game voice telling you to "Lock those balls".

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337



WORLD CUP 98 — PCZ #65 • 91%

NEW ENTRY Graphics and detail to die for, a creative control system that allows for awesome moves and goals, extremely competent AI and excellent presentation make this a must-have, even though it lacks a custom tournament mode.

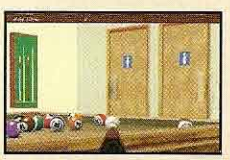
PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442



NBA LIVE 98 — PCZ #60 • 90%

✪ With even better graphics and commentary than before, it's one of the best-looking PC sports games. This version sports 'realistic' faces and players of different heights – it's by far the best basketball game available.

PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442



VIRTUAL POOL 2 — PCZ #58 • 90%

✪ Okay, so *Virtual Pool 2* scored one per cent less than its predecessor, but this follow-up beats it hands down. 3Dfx support goes some way to pushing the series further, and the inclusion of English Pub rules make it a more essential purchase than before.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



ACTUA SOCCER 2 — PCZ #59 • 90%

✪ Instantly accessible footie action in this latest instalment of Gremlin's high profile *Actua* series. Great graphics, easy control and a hidden Super Furry Animals team confirm *Actua 2*'s 'must have' status.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 2738601



THE GOLF PRO — PCZ #62 • 90%

✪ If you're bored with either *PGA* or *Links*, then this is the best of the 'mouse-swing' bunch. Good course design and some excellent tuition means there's loads of gameplay, though the putting lets it down a tad.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337

ALSO CONSIDER

✪ **There's always a swell of different sports game types depending on the current sporting season. These are worth having a look at...**

MADDEN NFL 98 EA Sports • PCZ #59 • 87%
TRIPLE PLAY 99 Electronic Arts • PCZ #64 • 90%
TROPHY BASS 2 Cendant • PCZ #50 • 84%

ADVENTURE GAMES



ALONE IN THE DARK 3 — PCZ #21 • 95%

✪ Better than the previous *AITD* instalments, *Alone 3* is a tense, ambient tale of Navajo Indian magic and reincarnation that unfolds in the usual *AITD* manner. This is now available as part of a compilation budget pack.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0181 738 8199



BIOFORGE — PCZ #25 • 95%

✪ Futuristic *Alone In The Dark*-style game with impressive graphics, puzzles and soundtrack. Often preferred over *AITD* games as its unique blend of arcade combat is explosive. The only drag is EA's refusal to make a sequel for it.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



SYSTEM SHOCK — PCZ #20 • 95%

✪ This futuristic first-person cyberpunk adventure from the makers of *Ultima* was initially overlooked by many people. Now available on budget, this is a must-buy for those new to the genre. The graphics might be a little dated, but the atmosphere is still invigorating.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



DISCWORLD II — PCZ #44 • 93%

✪ Perfect Entertainment's immaculate sequel to *Discworld* follows would-be wizard Rincewind in his search for the Grim Reaper. Not as hard as the first game, but bigger and better looking. *Discworld II* is a universally appealing adventure game.

PUBLISHER Psygnosis • 0151 282 3000



INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS — PCZ #37 • 93%

✪ Follow a post-*Raiders* Indy in his search for the submerged metropolis. Three ways to play make for a high replayability factor, and the inter-character banter is brilliant.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/VIE • 0171 368 2255



LBA 2: TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY — PCZ #54 • 93%

✪ Twinsen is back – this time to thwart those pesky Esmers in this sumptuous sequel. The huge play area in *LBA 2*, coupled with seamlessly linked puzzles, creates a great-looking and hugely atmospheric adventure. A must for adventure fans.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



SAM & MAX — PCZ #11 • 93%

✪ The hilarious dog/rabbit duo's first and only PC outing, in which they need to solve a host of bizarre puzzles. An all-talkie adventure with a gag-laden script, this is an essential budget-priced purchase even if you're not a point-and-click fan.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/VIE • 0171 368 2255



THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND — PCZ #58 • 92%

✪ The third game in LucasArts' classic *Monkey* saga delivers the goods big-time, much to the relief of adventure fans everywhere. *The Curse Of Monkey Island* is the new benchmark for point-and-click adventure games.

PUBLISHER VIE • 0171 368 2255



STARSHIP TITANIC — PCZ #63 • 91%

✪ Douglas Adams' epic adventure is an innovative piece of software filled with everything that's right about adventure games. With its lush visuals and an innovative user interface, *Starship Titanic* is a must-buy for adventure fans.

PUBLISHER Zablac Entertainment • 01626 332233



ECSTATICA II — PCZ #48 • 91%

✪ We dubbed it "an adventure with balls". It's hard, but it's one of the most rewarding adventures we've ever seen. It constantly surprises and is sure to keep even the most battle-weary adventure fan busy for weeks.

PUBLISHER Psygnosis • 0151 282 3000

ALSO CONSIDER

FULL THROTTLE Virgin • PCZ #27 • 92%
THE PANDORA DIRECTIVE Virgin • PCZ #43 • 92%
TOONSTRUCK Virgin • PCZ #45 • 93%
GABRIEL KNIGHT 2: THE BEAST WITHIN Cendant • PCZ #36 • 88%
LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE Electronic Arts • PCZ #21 • 93%

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD 2: LABYRINTH OF WORLDS — PCZ #1 • 94%

✪ This improves on almost every aspect of its prequel, *The Stygian Abyss*. You explore a complex, ever-evolving dungeon; it has unsurpassed atmosphere and interaction.

PUBLISHER Origin/EA • 01753 549442



REALMS OF THE HAUNTING — PCZ #47 • 93%

✪ Although overlooked by many fans of the genre, our Mallo gave it a whopping 93 per cent when he reviewed it back in issue 47. Still well worth a look if you happen to see it going cheap, *ROTH* is a well cool mix of adventure and RPG.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 2738601



LANDS OF LORE: GUARDIANS OF DESTINY — PCZ #56 • 92%

✪ Four long years in the making, Westwood Studios' mammoth new adventure proved more than worth the wait. Sumptuous visuals and a tremendous atmosphere combine to make it an instant classic.

PUBLISHER VIE • 0171 368 2255



FALLOUT — PCZ #61 • 91%

✪ This surprised everyone in the office, proving to be both addictive and well conceived. Give it a chance and you'll discover that *Fallout* is a rewarding RPG which'll keep you entertained for hours. Not quite on a par with the mighty *Ultima* series, but then what is?

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



ULTIMA VII — PCZ #3 • 89%

✪ Arguably the best of all the *Ultima* games, *Ultima VII* blends character interaction and the exploration of the world of Britannia. The last *Ultima* series to give complete party control. Check out the *Ultima Collection* for a real treat.

PUBLISHER Origin/EA • 01753 549442



DIABLO — PCZ #48 • 88%

✪ Standard hack 'n' slash fare, but pulled off with such style that it's addictive. A great storyline compensates for repetitive arcade combat and supremely detailed animation makes it a superb coffee-table game.

PUBLISHER Zablac/Blizzard • 01626 332233



TERRIS — PCZ #44 • 88%

✪ A MUD in the old-school style of text-based RPGs, but it's so addictive that we're still playing it. The various quests, puzzles and monsters will keep you going for days. The gameplay is excellent, if you can handle the 'texty-ness'.

PUBLISHER AOL • 0800 279 7444



MERIDIAN 59 — PCZ #45 • 86%

✪ This ground-breaking on-line RPG enables thousands of people to interact with each other in the same fantasy universe at the same time. Garish and horrible graphics aside, *Meridian 59* remains one of the best online multiplayer RPGs around.

PUBLISHER 3DO Company • 0181 296 1949



RAVENLOFT: STONE PROPHET — PCZ #25 • 78%

✪ This is better than SSI's previous AD&D *Ravenloft* RPGs. You have to battle through a landscape populated by stone golems and scorpions. The graphics are pretty average, but the intuitive spell/combat system is a joy.

PUBLISHER Mindscape • 01444 246333



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: THE STYGIAN ABYSS — PRE-PC ZONE

✪ This took role-playing games away from first-person tile-based RPGs. Amazing architecture, witty characterisations, layers of storyline and the best ending of any game in history.

PUBLISHER Origin/EA • 01753 549442

ALSO CONSIDER

✪ These are the cream of the crop, largely because RPGs have taken a back seat to other game types over the last couple of years. However, also bear in mind...
DIABLO: HELLFIRE Cendant • PCZ #59 • 82%
ULTIMA COLLECTION Electronic Arts • PCZ #62 • 90%

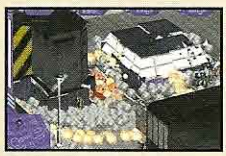
STRATEGY GAMES



DUNGEON KEEPER — PCZ #53 • 96%

✪ A game with a genre almost impossible to define, *DK* takes *SimCity 2000*, *C&C* and *Ultima Underworld* and remoulds them into one hell of a title. Fantastic gameplay, and a lifespan on a par with the Queen Mother.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



SYNDICATE WARS — PCZ #43 • 95%

✪ One of the best strategy games of all time gets a sequel, and what a fabulous sequel it is too. *Syndicate Wars* houses a wealth of intricate levels, gorgeous graphics and enough gratuitous violence to keep anyone happy.

PUBLISHER EA/Bullfrog • 01753 549442



X-COM 3: APOCALYPSE — PCZ #52 • 95%

✪ A revamped engine and a healthy helping of real-time combat have brought the fantastically addictive *X-COM* series bang up to date. If you like your strategy games deep and meaningful, you should buy *X-COM 3* immediately. It'll keep you busy for weeks.

PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893



COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT — PCZ #47 • 94%

✪ ...or *C&C* in SVGA with a few new units. It's a testament to the original's gameplay that the sequel can get away with adding few new features and still be such fun to play.

PUBLISHER VIE • 0171 368 2255



PUZZLE BOBBLE — PCZ #50 • 94%

✪ We can't agree exactly where *Puzzle Bobble* fits – should it go in here, with the *Civs* and *Sims* of the PC gaming world, or in the Action section? But it most certainly deserves to be in our Top 100 section. Totally absorbing and addictive puzzle game.

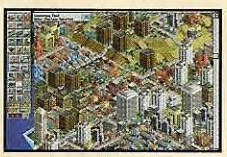
PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791



AGE OF EMPIRES — PCZ #54 • 94%

✪ Imagine *Civilization 2*'s great empire-building gameplay improved with some excellent graphical touches and comprehensive multi and single-player options (all in real time). That's *Age Of Empires* in a nutshell.

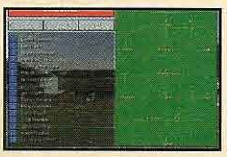
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000



SIMCITY 2000 — PCZ #13 • 92%

✪ A classic that deserves its reputation as one of the all-time greats in the strategy world. Build and maintain the city of your dreams and cope with all the problems a real-life Mayor would come up against. It's a lot more fun than it sounds, trust us.

PUBLISHER Maxis • 0171 505 1500



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 97/98 — PCZ #57 • 90%

✪ The best football management game ever gets its seasonal update and a few added extras – you can now play a number of leagues simultaneously, and edit the existing stats.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000



CIVILIZATION 2 — PCZ #36 • 90%

✪ Explore the world, conquer territories and research new technologies in one of the most successful strategy games ever. It's not that different to the first one, but it merits a '90s update and a place here.

PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893



M1 TANK PLATOON II — PCZ #63 • 90%

✪ Almost a decade after the original, MicroProse released this heavyweight real-time, modern-day combat sim to much critical acclaim. It's deep, heavy going and intense, but well worth the effort. A must for hard-core strategy fans.

PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893

ALSO CONSIDER

STARCRAFT Cendant • PCZ #64 • 88%
IMPERIUM GALACTICA GTi • PCZ #53 • 90%
INCUBATION Blue Byte • PCZ #56 • 94%
MASTER OF ORION 2 MicroProse • PCZ #45 • 92%
TOTAL ANNIHILATION GTi • PCZ #56 • 92%
WARLORDS III: REIGN OF HEROES Broderbund • PCZ #55 • 90%
SETTLERS 2 Blue Byte • PCZ #41 • 92%

FLIGHT SIMULATION GAMES



FLIGHT SIM 98 — PCZ #55 • 94%

✪ Another year, and yet another flight sim to come from the mighty Microsoft. However, this time, with two new aircraft, a helicopter, hundreds of new airports and hugely impressive 3D acceleration, it's really worth having.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000



F-22 ADF — PCZ #60 • 93%

✪ DID do it again with this awesome new combat sim that leaves the competition firmly on the ground. Graphics and control to die for, it only really lacks a decent campaign. The *Total Air War* add-on pack will make it near perfect.

PUBLISHER Ocean/DID • 0161 832 6633



TEAM APACHE — PCZ #65 • 93%

NEW ENTRY A highly accessible and detailed chopper combat sim. You can get on with the fun stuff without struggling with systems and an over-complex flight model. A bit vacuous for die-hard prop-heads, but one of the most fun to play.

PUBLISHER Mindscape • 01444 246333



LONGBOW 2 — PCZ #59 • 92%

✪ "*Longbow 2* is challenging, beautiful, exciting and fun – if you're 3Dfx'd up," we said in our review. If you don't have any extra graphics hardware, there's only one thing to do – think 'upgrade', 'upgrade' and 'upgrade'. It'll be worth the investment.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



JANE'S F-15 — PCZ #64 • 92%

✪ A hard-core propeller-head's sim that can stand alongside the awesome Longbow 2 as one of the most realistic flight sims available. Newbies to the genre might find it a bit overwhelming, but it's worth persevering with.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



US MARINE FIGHTERS — PCZ #30 • 92%

✪ Lovely graphics and a realistic enough flight model. This was originally released as a mission disk for *US Navy Fighters*, but it now comes as part of the *US Navy Fighters Gold* pack, so make sure you go get that instead!

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



FLYING CORPS GOLD — PCZ #59 • 92%

✪ Action-packed WWI flight simulation with neato graphics. Some of you may recall *Red Baron* as one of the greatest WW1 flight sims ever – this improves on the old classic to become the best PC WW1 sim currently available.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337



JETFIGHTER III — PCZ #47 • 91%

✪ The follow-up to one of the most popular sims ever. Fly over three and a half million square miles of accurately-mapped terrain of South America. It really is just like being there. Oh yeah, you get to shoot things too, but sadly there's no duty free option.

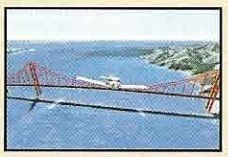
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000



A-10 CUBA! — PCZ #59 • 90%

✪ Functional graphics for a game that really does capture the imagination, mainly because the plane is an absolute joy to fly. Although it's slightly limited due to a lack of a fully-fledged campaign it's still great fun, as well as being pretty speedy on a modest Pentium.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



FLIGHT UNLIMITED II — PCZ #60 • 84%

✪ It can't really compete with the behemoth that is *Flight Sim 98*, and as a result is somewhat limited and claustrophobic. However, it does score highly for being more detailed in its smaller area, and much more fun.

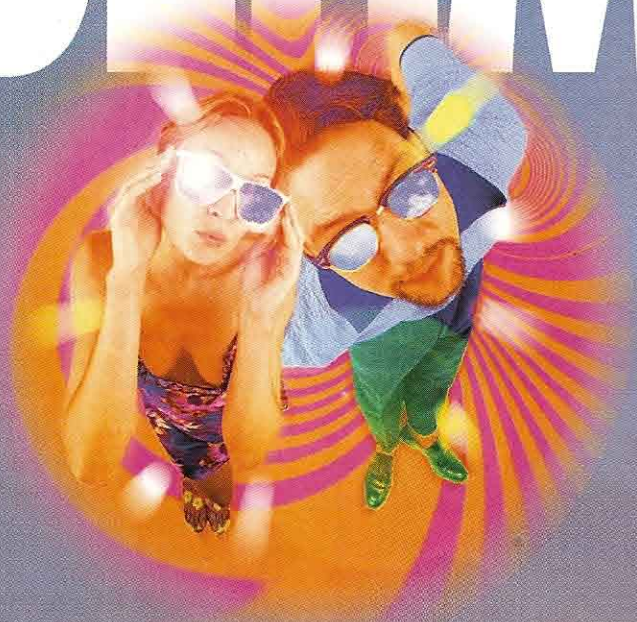
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000

ALSO CONSIDER

✪ **If a flight sim is good, you can bet it'll stay on the shelves for a long time – hence our recommendation for *US Marine Fighters*. Some of the more recent releases worth considering include...**

AIR WARRIOR III Interactive Magic • PCZ #62 • 80%
COMANCHE 3 NovaLogic • PCZ #51 • 92%
COMANCHE GOLD NovaLogic • PCZ #65 • 87%
F/A-18 KOREA Empire Interactive • PCZ #61 • 90%

ULTIMATE P



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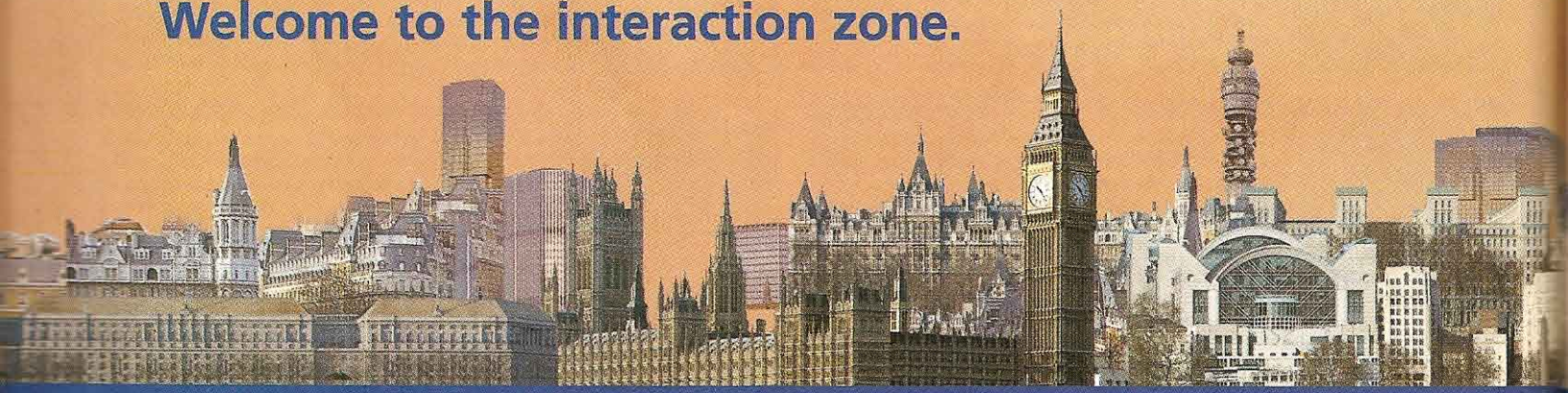
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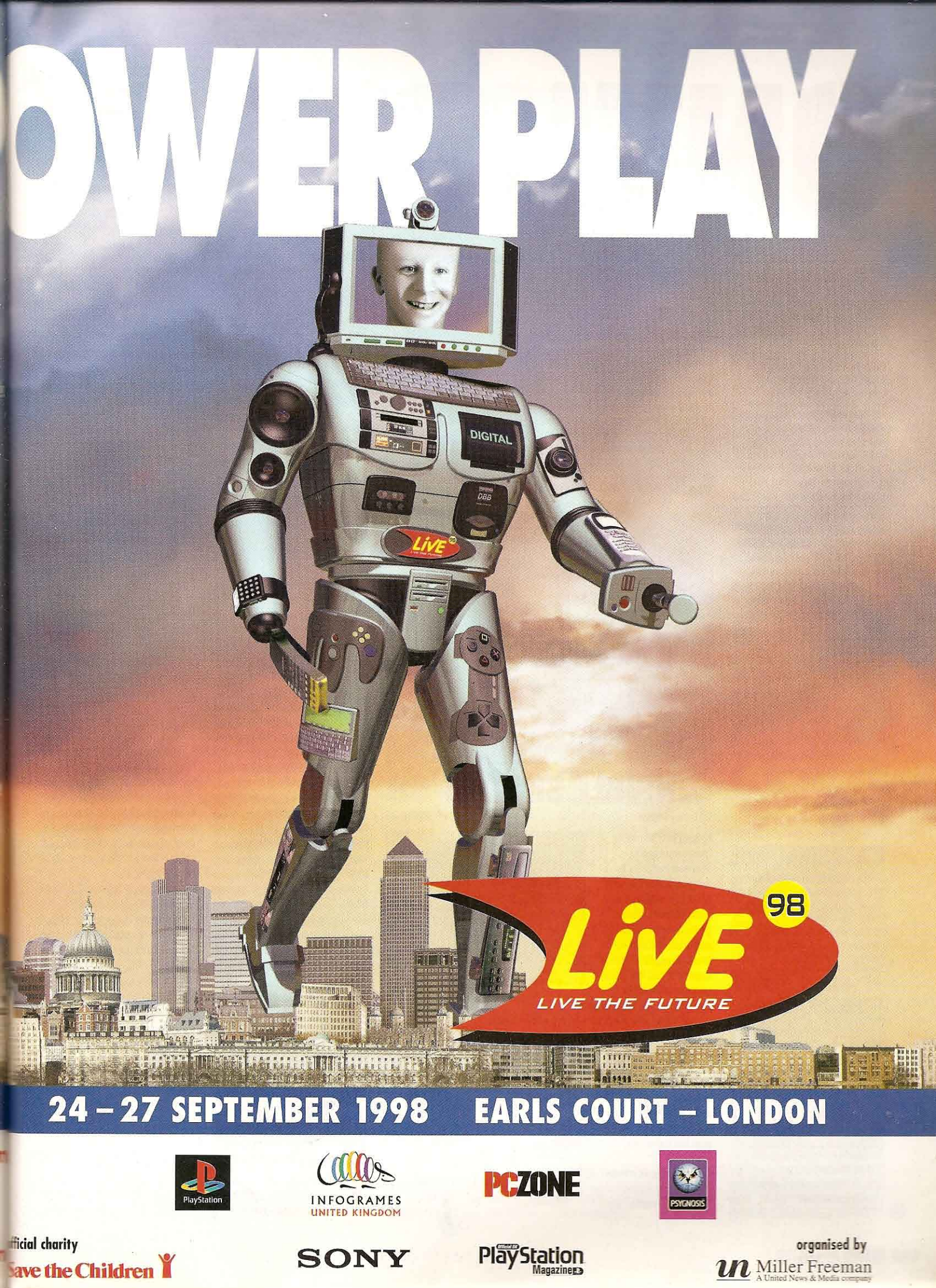
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ON THE CD

Sick to the back teeth of footie? There's plenty more to get excited about on our CD (including Gillian Anderson)

WORDS Richie Shoemaker **DISKMEISTER** Daniel Emery

HELP!

CD trouble? HD playing up? Don't worry – phone our helpline and sort yourself out, pronto!

HD DISK HELP Phone Matthew on 01274 736990 Any weekday between 9am and 4pm.

CD-ROM HELP Phone ABT on 01708 250250 or pczone@abt-net.demon.co.uk Any weekday between 9:30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm. (Please do not phone the *PC Zone* office as we're too busy putting the mag together to answer your calls.)

BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling either helpline, then please take note of the following points:

- If possible, have your PC operating and near to the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, sound card, RAM etc – plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call to jot down the relevant info.

NO CD?

If you don't have the CD issue, then fear not! Simply fill out this slip, enclose your HDs from the cover plus a cheque for a whole £1 and send it to:

CD Exchange (65), *PC Zone*, Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North, Bristol BS12 0BQ

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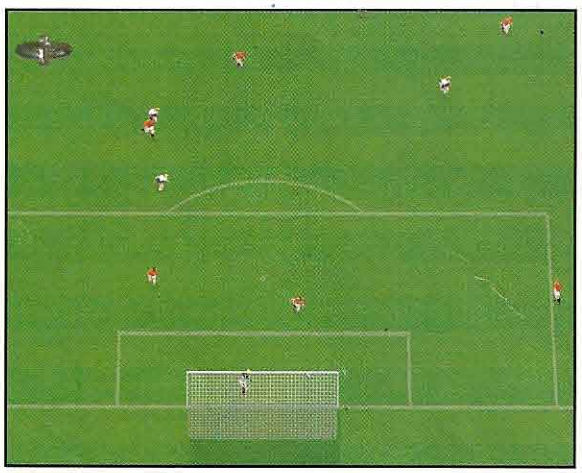
Please make cheques payable to: DENNIS PUBLISHING LTD.

- CDs from previous issues are also available – call 01789 490213.

DEMOS + SHAREWARE

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- **You'll need at least a Pentium 133 with 16Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.**
- **Many of the programs on our cover CD-ROM are designed to run under Windows 95 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium 166 with 32Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.**
- **Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are Windows 95, DOS and 3D accelerator only.**



SENSIBLE SOCCER '98

GT Interactive



Have your own World Cup.

At long last Sensible have managed to squeeze out their long-delayed sequel to still what is probably the most playable footie game ever created. It may lack the visuals of *World Cup '98* or *Actua Soccer 2*, but the game remains almost as playable as it's always been.

See what you think by playing either a one-player game as England (versus us) or a two-player game, Scotland versus USA. The game will be played over just one half and will end as soon as a goal is scored, which means if you play against the *PC Zone* team it would be in your best interests not to score. Fair? Who said we were fair?



Controls: Gamepad/keyboard
D,G,R,C – Directional control
Z/A – Pass, shoot/tackle

COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES

Eidos



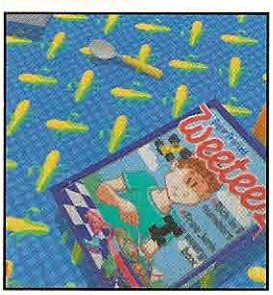
CHECK OUT OUR FULL REVIEW ON PAGE 96

Another real-time strategy game that dares to be different. You are the commander of an elite bunch of WWII soldiers. Each one is a specialist in their field, all with different abilities, whom you must use to complete the two missions in this cover disc demo. Beware: it's bloody hard – casualties are not permitted. Make sure you take a look at the in-game help for all the important info.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard
MOUSE/CURSORS – Pan main view
LMB – Select unit/move unit (double-click to run)
RMB – Deselect
+/- – Zoom in/out
1-8 – Select unit

MICRO MACHINES V3

Codemasters



Destruction Dirtbox is the curious title of one of the three tracks on offer in this miniature racing game in the land of the giants. Try it out single-player in time-trial mode or race head-to-head.

Controls: Gamepad/keyboard
X/C – Left/right
CAPS LOCK – Accelerate
SHIFT – Brake/decelerate
A – Horn

CONFLICT: FREESPACE - THE GREAT WAR

Interplay



DON'T MISS OUR FULL REVIEW ON PAGE 102

It looks like developers Volition have come up trumps, with a space combat sim that puts the *Wing Commander* series to shame... well, almost. Try the training mission and the first combat mission from the full game – that should be enough to convince you.

Controls: Joystick/mouse/keyboard
BACKSPACE – Zero throttle
**** – Full throttle
M – Match speed with target
TAB – Afterburner
Left CONTROL – Fire primary
SPACE – Fire missiles
T – Target next
H – Target next hostile
ALT+H – Autotargetting of hostiles
S – Target next subsystem
K – Target next live turret
ALT+J – Subspace jump (ends mission)
Keypad 8,2,4,6 – Turn and pitch
Keypad 7,9 – Bank left, right
A/Z – Accelerate/decelerate
. – Cycle primary weapons
/ – Cycle secondary weapons
X – Countermeasures
C – Comms menu
F1 – Help

JANE'S F-15
Electronic Arts



Fly a one-off mission from the latest feature-heavy sim from military publishers Jane's. The demo mission on our cover CD starts in the air with the autopilot engaged. By default, the viewpoints will switch to show you external views of other objects. When you are ready to take control, you simply move the joystick. Make sure you scrutinise the accompanying readme file. *Jane's F-15* was reviewed in issue 64 of *PC Zone* and received a whopping 94%.

Controls: Joystick/keyboard/mouse
ESC – End mission
F1 – Forward cockpit view
F2 – Look down MPD view
F3 – WSO forward view (backseat)
F4 – Virtual cockpit
F5 – Left cockpit view
F6 – Right cockpit view
F7 – Tactical view
F8 – Fixed chase view
F9 – Weapon view
F10 – Wingman view
F11 – *View ground objects*
F12 – Unlimited camera view
+/- – Increase/decrease throttle
R – Re-arm
T – Next target
P – Pause simulation
A – Autopilot
H – HUD colour
J – Jump
Z/X – Zoom in/out displays
SPACE – Change weapon
PG UP/PG DOWN – Accelerate time/decelerate time



FINAL FANTASY VII
Eidos

CHECK OUT THE REVIEW ON PAGE 92

The mega-popular PlayStation RPG makes a successful transition to PC, making full use of 3Dfx cards to render the stylish anime characters. It may take a while to get used to the control system for the in-game menus but that's what the readme file is for.

Controls: Keyboard/gamepad
CURSORS – Movement and menu selection
ENTER – Action (OK button)
Left CONTROL – Cancel, run (when in field when used together with arrow keys)
Left SHIFT – Menu
SPACE – Switch
PG UP (Page up in the menu) – Escape from the battle (together with Pg Down)
PG DOWN (Pg Down in the menu) – Escape from the battle (together with Pg Up)
END – Highlights targets (in battle)
INSERT – Pause (during battle)
DELETE – Help pointers (in field) and Help window (during battle)
CONTROL+Q – Quit

NIGHTMARE CREATURES
Activision

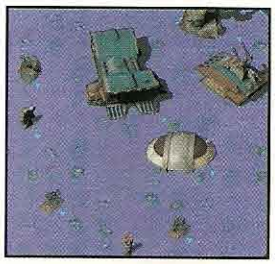


CHECK OUT OUR FULL REVIEW ON PAGE 118

Turn-of-the-century London is the time and the place, and chopping hulks of rotting flesh off undead creatures is the aim. It's a simple hack 'em up with lots of special moves and buckets of blood. Check out the readme file for more details.

Controls: *Keyboard/gamepad*
CURSORS – Movement
Left SHIFT+ALT+DOWN – Turn around
ENTER – Use object
Keypad 1,2 – Cycle objects
Keypad 0 – Jump
CONTROL – Strike
Left SHIFT – Block
SPACE – Kick
ALT+RIGHT/LEFT – Dodge right/left
Left SHIFT+UP – Slow walk
ALT+X – Quit

CYBERSTORM 2: CORPORATE WARS
Sierra



Hey, it's another *C&C* looky-likey, this one featuring Mech looky-likeys, based on the *Earthsiege* games. The good thing is that there are seven missions in this demo, all of which are customisable. That many missions makes for a lengthy demo in anyone's book.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard
F12 – Bring up menu
Keypad 1-9 – Scroll map (Shift will accelerate)
Keypad 5 – Centre map around current units
Keypad +/- – Zoom in-out (shift will accelerate)
Keypad / – Centre on enemy of current unit
Keypad * (or SPACE) – Centre on terrain location where last damage was done
Z – Select your entire force as current group
X – Select all your on-screen units as current group
</> – Rotate through your units
[– Jack up current group
ESC – Stop movement of current group (**Shift-ESC** = all units)
I – Stand
K – Crouch
J – Stand/crouch toggle
+ / – – Shields forward/centred
1-8 – Fire weapon for primary unit
SHIFT 1-4 – Toggle internal device information (use with caution)
F5 – Force map cursor mode: move
F6 – Force map cursor mode: target (also **Ctrl** does same)
F7 – Force map cursor mode: rotate
F8 – Force map cursor mode: shield-facing
A – Attack (temporary order)
M – Mini map type
D – Select data-area contents
F – Formation
O – Orders
U – Select unit
G – Select group
Shift-G – Remember group
V – Select map view
SHIFT+V – Remember map view
CONTROL+S – Save game
CONTROL+L – Load game
CONTROL+P – Preferences
ALT+F4 – Exit

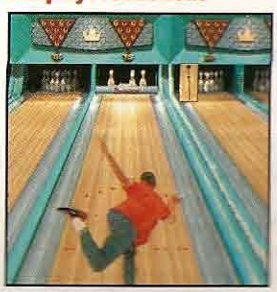
POLICE QUEST: SWAT 2
Sierra



As Chris Anderson will no doubt testify without too much coercion, there's nothing quite like *X-COM*. Here, though, is a game that is very much like it, although instead of going against comicbook aliens with a team of hard-bastard marines, you're up against a couple of bumbling bank-robbers with a gung-ho SWAT team – all in real-time.

Controls: Mouse

ALLEY 19 BOWLING
Starplay Productions



Let's go to the hop (ooh baby) – yep, it's ten-pin bowling time again. This demo enables you to play five frames where you use



MECHCOMMANDER

Microprose

CHECK OUT THE REVIEW ON PAGE 98

Instead of following the usual *C&C* route, FASA, the developers of *MechWarrior,* went about creating something a little bit different. There isn't much resource management to be done but what characterises the game is the wealth of customisable options for your Mechs and the experience that the pilots gain through the missions. You won't be able to appreciate all the game's finer points here, but you'll get the general idea.



Controls: Keyboard/mouse
LMB – Select unit (drag to select group), move units
E – Select all units on screen
RMB – Deselect all units
SPACE+LMB – Run
J+LMB – Jump
BACKSPACE – Stop/hold fire
LMB+(1-9) – Attack Mech body parts (see readme file)
ESC – Pause
PG UP/PG DOWN – Power up/down
HOME – Eject
MOUSE/CURSORS – Scroll map
+/- – Zoom in/out

ÜZ

Masterworks



A simple shareware puzzle game in which the idea is to line up matching tiles until there are none left. Well, it starts off simple anyway.
Controls: Mouse

GAMING VALUE PACK 1

Shareware

Despite the name, the only value in this pack is the amount of hard-drive space it takes up – 1K. The only future for this shareware game is as a reflex test for drunk drivers. Enjoy – if you can.
Controls: Mouse

LEISURE SUIT LARRY'S CASINO

Sierra



Play offline blackjack in Larry's Casino or go online and play against like-minded individuals naked in hot-tubs. Alternatively, you can go into the comedy clubs and exchange smutty jokes for virtual cash. (There are worse ways of spending your time, I suppose.)
Controls: Mouse

NAME THAT GAME

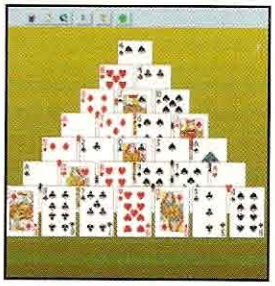
Shareware



Yet another puzzle game. Choose an icon of a famous game and then arrange the letter tiles to spell said game. Believe us – it sounds more interesting than it actually is.
Controls: Mouse

PRETTY GOOD SOLITAIRE '98

Shareware



With a name like that, this game could review itself. What's 'pretty good' anyway – 70%, 60%? Hang on, it's a card game… Mind you, with over 160 variations on the same game it'd better be bloody good.
Controls: Mouse

SOLKAN SOLITAIRE

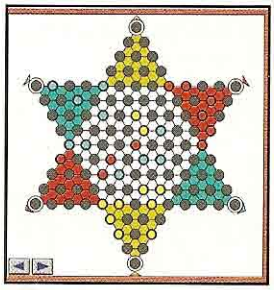
Shareware



As if one wasn't enough, we've got three of the bloody things (*Solitaire City* is also included on this month's CD – check out the details under 'Got the floppy disk version?' panel on the right). It's like waiting for a bus. Months go by without hide nor hair of a level-headed card game, then three come along all at once. Expect a dedicated solitaire magazine to hit the shelves soon.
Controls: Mouse

CHAMPIONSHIP CHINESE CHECKERS

Shareware



Not the most exciting game you'll ever see, but this 15-day evaluation of the ludo-esque board game is a fair waste of time. Basically, you have to get your coloured pegs to the other side of the board before your opponents. Simple really.
Controls: Mouse

ON THE CD EXTENDED PLAY

Do more with your games, thanks to this assortment of new software

CHECK OUT EXTENDED PLAY, PAGE 164

You will need to have WinZip set up on your machine to install some of these enhancements. Note: some of these files may alter your original files. You install these programs at your own risk.

AGE OF EMPIRES

A massive editor that enables you to mess around with 200 different factors that govern character intelligence in *Age Of Empires.* The only problem is that it times out at the end of the month, but thankfully you can download the next version in August.

FLIGHT UNLIMITED II

Loads of little treats for fans of the peace-loving flight simulator, including a map builder, an adventure creator, as well as a couple of ready-made adventures and a new plane for you to fly. You'll need to install the latest patch upgrades which are also on the disc.

GRAND THEFT AUTO

Three more reasons to get excited about the driving game that got the press and politicians frothing at the mouth. You'll find a car editor, a map editor and a game editor. Look deeply enough and you'll probably also find a tabloid editor, searching for a scandal.



Create your own maps for *Grand Theft Auto* – see page 164.

PATCHES

We've packed the CD with every new patch we could find. Get more out of your existing games with this collection of software

Many of the patches are self-extracting – the installation program will automatically detect where the full game is installed, and you just follow the on-screen instructions. Some of the patches will extract to a /patches directory on your c:\ drive. In this case, run the patch from there or take a look at the accompanying readme file.

AIDE DE CAMP II
A v2.05 upgrade which converts your old table-top wargames to PBM games.

AIR WARRIOR III
Fix those annoying memory problems with the 3.06 upgrade for Interactive Magic's online flight sim.

ARMOURED FIST 2
The latest patch for NovaLogic's tank sim brings the version up to number 1.03.

BURNOUT: CHAMPIONSHIP DRAG RACING
Upgrade to v1.20. This patch fixes a total of 23 elements!

CHASM: THE RIFT
The fabled 'supergun' patch adds a new weapon to this not-particularly-super *Quake* clone.

FIFA: ROAD TO WORLD CUP '98
Direct3D and Voodoo 2 support, as well as an AI enhancement for users with v1.40 already installed.

FLYING CORPS
Massive graphic update that includes generic 3D support, as well as that for Voodoo 2 cards – not to mention fixes for a few other things.

FORSAKEN
Apparently, some users have had problems on the Military level. This'll sort it out.

HARDBALL 6
Patches for 3Dfx users and a fix for a few other things that should've been sorted out before.

JAZZ JACKRABBIT II
This patch improves on the graphics of the retail version, as well as fixing a few network problems. V1.21.

JET FIGHTER II
This dating flight sim gets force feedback support, as well as a few other things.

M1 TANK PLATOON 2
A plethora of fixes for the greatest sequel to one of the best tank sims we've seen.

MAGIC: THE GATHERING
Updates Microprose's fantasy card game to ManaLink 1.3.

PRO PINBALL: TIMESHOCK
Both Windows and DOS users can upgrade their versions of *Pro Pinball* to v1.07.

PRO-PILOT
Upgrades the retail version of *Pro-Pilot* to v1.02.

QUAKE II
It's the latest, brand-spanking-new version 3.15, as mentioned in this month's Watchdog (page 152). You'll need it for Wireplay.

RED BARON II
Sierra finally tweak their lacklustre WWI flight sim. Fixes flight model problems among other things.

RESIDENT EVIL
At last, Virgin's shit 'em up will work on machines fitted with a Voodoo 2 card.

SCREAMER RALLY
Voodoo 2 bug-fix and new textures for Milestone's manic mudroller.

SPEC OPS: RANGERS ASSAULT
One patch to fix a few of those graphical glitches, and another for mouse support.

TRIPLE PLAY 99
EA's top baseball sim gets the Voodoo 2 treatment, along with a sound enhancement and a multiplayer bug-fix.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION: CORE CONTINGENCY
UK users have had problems with Cavedog's mission pack. This should sort things out.

UNREAL
The first patch for *Unreal* is already here, this one allows you to start Internet games from within your Web browser.

XENOCRACY
If you're having problems networking this space-based combat sim then you'll be needing this patch.

ADDED EXTRAS

And when you've finished with that lot, there's more...

WIREPLAY
Essentials and recent additions to the Wireplay service are all included on the CD. If you've got a modem and want something new to do with it, install the latest version of Wireplay's Client software. If you want to play *Quake* online, you'll also need *QuakeWorld 2.10*. And you'll also find a few other goodies for both the original *Quake* and *Quake II*, as well as the full version of the WWII dogfighting game *Air Attack* – a game that's been steadily gaining popularity since its recent introduction.

PC ZONE TIPS DATABASE
Slowly but surely the *Zone* tips database grows like a festering pustule on the face of more honest gaming. Pull those old and new games off the shelf because now you can cheat your way to gaming hell without feeling guilty in the slightest.

GILLIAN ANDERSON INTERVIEW
A horde of journos from the gaming industry spawn all over each other to get the lowdown on the better-looking half of the *X-Files* duo. Listen to her squirm under the intense questioning, especially from *Zone*'s own muckraker, David 'Paxman' McCandless.

CLARANET
One month's free trial of one of the UK's cheapest Internet Service Providers (includes a version of Internet Explorer and a configuration set-up file for those with it already installed.

PLUS
EZ Desk '95 v1.7
Superb application for saving desktop configurations. Useful for when you crash out of games.

Paint Shop Pro v5
The latest and greatest shareware paint program. Useful for creating skins for *Quake* (see part two of our special feature, page 146).

WinZip v6.3
Essential archiving utility no-one should be without.

DirectX v5.2
Drivers essential to run all the latest games and demos.

DirectPlay v5.0a
Microsoft online drivers for Internet-based multiplayers.

Glide v2.43/3Dfx Voodoo 2 drivers
The latest drivers for Voodoo 1 and Voodoo 2 graphics cards.

SciTech Display Doctor v6.0
Graphics card playing up? Try a course of this for 30 days.

Ameol v2.12
CIX online conferencing software.

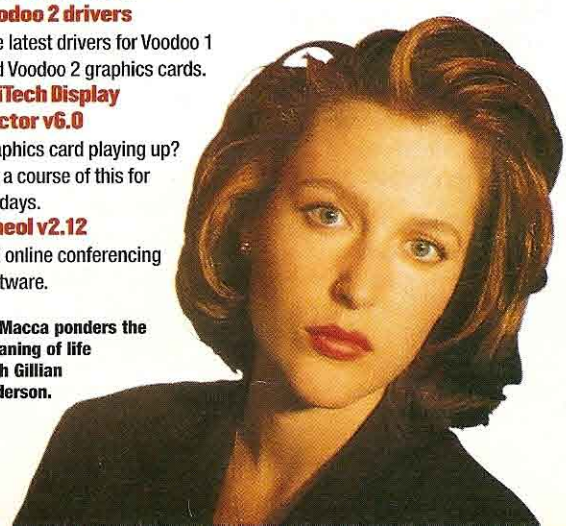
GetRight 3.1
A soothing cure for those downloading headaches.

Kali95
Popular Internet gaming software.

Netscape Navigator 4.05
The latest version of *Zone*'s favourite Net browser.

Oil Change v2.1
Find and download the latest software upgrades.

TimeOnLine 1.01e
Save money by keeping track of your time online. PCZ



Macca ponders the meaning of life with Gillian Anderson.

GOT THE FLOPPY DISK VERSION?

Since floppies only contain a fraction of the info contained on a CD, there ain't a lot on the *Zone* floppies. Maybe you should think about upgrading!

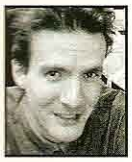
Note: Solitaire is also on the CD.

HD – SOLITAIRE CITY
Shareware

Alone in a deserted city, blighted by nuclear holocaust, you have to learn to survive in an urban wasteland populated by green-skinned mutants... Hang on, it's another card game. Jesus, I ask you.

Controls: Mouse

EXTENDED PLAY



Hack and patch your way to a more fun-filled existence. Once again we've searched out the spiffiest utilities and the coolest tools, and crammed them on to our cover CD

WORDS Phil Wand • **CARTOON** Charlie Brooker

TRY IT YOURSELF

ON THE CD

On this month's cover CD we've got all the official patches, bug fixes, utilities and map editors we could find, including all the ones mentioned in these pages. To track them down, use the CD browser to go to the 'Patches' section. All the patches are listed with a brief description and any relevant documentation. Make sure you read any associated README files for information on how to install individual patches. For further help, turn to our CD pages, starting on page 160.

Those of you who can remember back as far as *Wolfenstein* will no doubt recall the small flotilla of add-ons that accompanied it. There were applications that violated the original graphics, little gizmos that randomised the locations of game elements, and perplexing editors that made the maps go all funny. They were mainly DOS-based, and on the whole pretty awful.

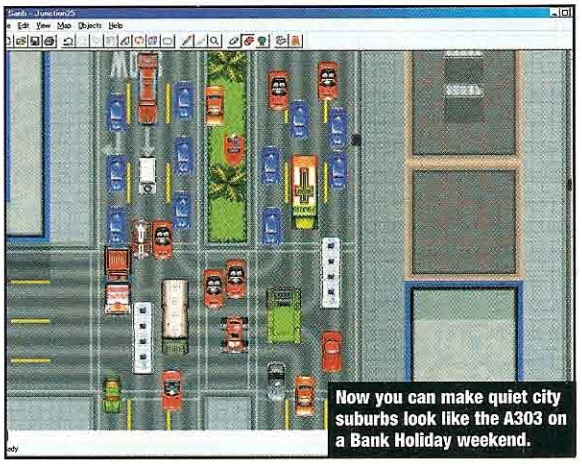
Then along came *Doom*, and with it a veritable armada of home-brew bolt-ons. They were better behaved and altogether more... well, convincing. Why? Because *Doom* had a massive following and was piss easy to tweak. In no time at all, there were swarms of hackers from Sweden to Skegness developing all sorts of crazy cracks. Who can forget the excellent *Simpsons* audio patch, or the infamous hard-core wall textures that turned level one deathmatch into a Gonzo porn set?

Since then, the world's gone bananas for game frigs. Every new release is subject to an electronic autopsy, with programmers performing experiments on the data files and screwing with the way they work. Developers are now using open architecture to make it easier to plug in new accessories, and an increasing number of in-house authoring tools are being tossed into the public domain.

So if you want to keep abreast of what's what – don't touch that dial! Stay tuned to Extended Play and get more from the games you already own.

"Who can forget the excellent *Simpsons* audio patch?"





Now you can make quiet city suburbs look like the A303 on a Bank Holiday weekend.

GRAND THEFT AUTO

Want to wipe out pedestrians in Oxford Street in a Cosworth-powered Mini Cooper? Of course you do

ON THE CD

Remember all the hooey that followed the release of DMA's splendid *Grand Theft Auto*? Within the space of a few months, we were told, PC and console game players would undergo behavioural mutations and end up as sub-human trash. They'd spazz out, steal cars, hijack school buses and wipe out pedestrians with Heckler & Koch rifles. Society would sink into lawlessness, and a sinister wind would whip hubcaps and old dustbins along the deserted city streets. A perfectly valid vision, I'm sure, but one which ignored the fact that *GTA* was more fun than running with scissors – so nobody cared, boxes flew off the shelves, and the publishers probably became wealthy enough to buy all the cars you ended up stealing in the game. Jammy bastards.

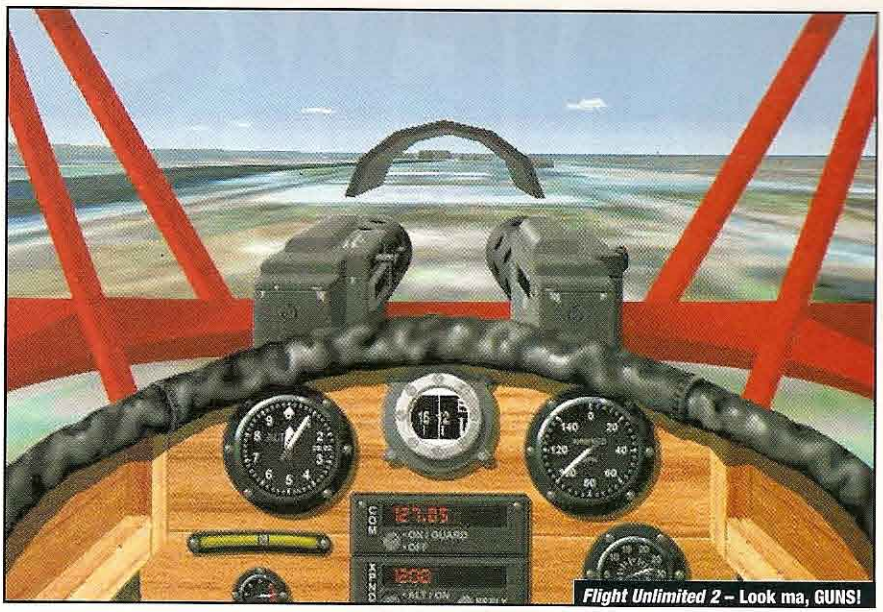
JUNCTION25 (*junction25.exe*) is a tip-top Windows-based editor that enables you to rearrange existing *GTA* maps or create your own. Its well-documented features, slick interface and thoughtful presentation would lead you to believe that it's a commercial product – but in actual fact, the three brains who put it together are giving it away.

"We first got hold of a demo of *GTA* from a cover CD around last October," says Jim Purbrick, the guy behind the Windows code. "We fell in love with it immediately, but soon got bored and started messing about with the game files. After the first few speedboat races on the streets of New York, we decided it would be great to be able to cause havoc on the streets of Nottingham. And that would require a map editor."

So *Junction25* was born. Once you've breezed through the installation and have shown it the *GTA* data files, you can select one of the different start-up options. You can choose to load up one of the original game scenarios in all its Technicolor glory, or you can decide to start from scratch (ack, nooo!) with a naked map. Be warned though – it takes a lot of practice, loads of spare time and the patience of a Beirut bricklayer to end up with anything that approaches the high standard set by the three DMA scenarios. Newcomers are advised to pick one of the original files to muck about with before trying anything heroic.

GTACARS (*gtacars200.zip*) is a small Windows tool that boasts a lot more in the 'instant fun' department. Essentially, it enables you to mess about with all the various cars and sprites. Back up your original *GTA* files and then –

> **"*Flight Unlimited II* beat *Flight Sim 98* and scooped the 'Best Non-Combat Sim' award at last year's E3 show"**



Flight Unlimited 2 – Look ma, GUNS!

well, anything goes really. You can make your car sound like a tank, or turn all the saloon cars into convertibles. Drop vehicle weights down to zero and feel what it's like to drive a car with four bars of soap instead of tyres. Go for a drive in the helicopter. Turn the police cars into flower-powered Love Bugs. Import your very own graphics and cars. Just a few little tweaks here and there and you'll find yourself hooked all over again.

The only obvious limitation with *GTACars* is that you can't change a vehicle's panels. So if, for example, you make your own Mini Cooper – not forgetting the ubiquitous Union Jack roof – and import it into the game, the doors will revert back to their original sprites when you have a smash. A bit of a disappointment, but one that most people should be able to live with.

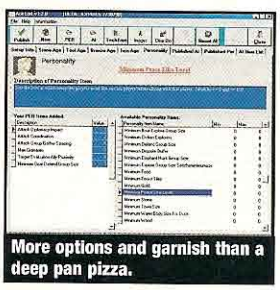
GTA EDITOR (*gtaed03fb.zip*) takes a slightly more subtle angle on adapting the original game, in that it's principally used to create super-beefy power-ups and shift car positions. In other words, you can now have rocket launchers with maximum ammunition and a purple Lambo parked nearby each time you kick off a new game. Which is nice.

AGE OF EMPIRES

Make computer opponents come alive with just a few clicks of the mouse

ON THE CD

Strategy geeks the world over popped their pimples in wonderment when Microsoft released *Age Of Empires*. Here was the game that *Civilization II* should have been, with its stunning graphics, hitherto unseen levels of detail, and the kind of gameplay that makes crack cocaine look non-addictive. If you'd cut your teeth on *Civ*, the *Age Of Empires* interface was a proverbial stroll in the park. To cap it all, it was multiplayer – meaning you could play along with other geeks and have a man-sized phone bill to show off to your chums at the next *Dr Who* convention.



More options and garnish than a deep pan pizza.

AOEEDIT (*AoeEdit120.zip*) is a builder/editor with more knobs and buttons than a knobs and buttons factory. It enables you to dig deep down into the computer's grey matter and alter the way it responds. In other words, you can play around with character attributes and make your opponents stronger, weaker, or just plain nuts. You can modify over 200 different traits and resources, including how well hostile groups band together, how long they wait before their first attack, and how much damage they'll take before pooping their pants and running away like girls. It's all remarkably easy, too – every modifiable element comes with a detailed description of what it does. I asked Michael Hoenie, *AoeEdit*'s creator and database fiend, to explain how he made it all possible.

"I compiled all the information I could find on the artificial intelligence side of things, and set out to write *AoeEdit*," he said. "It took between five and six hundred hours of solid Delphi programming to finish the first version. I showed it to David Pottinger at Ensemble studios – the game's creators – and he loved it. In fact I ended up with direct access to their development tools, and the latest version of *AoeEdit* contains more than 50 personality and intelligence codes that are not included on the original *Age Of Empires* CD-ROM."

The beta version of *AoeEdit* on this month's coverdisc is time-bombed for the end of July. It's the easiest way to stop old versions doing the rounds in a year's time, but it's also a pain in the butt. You'll need to download the latest version from the website in order to continue using it from August.

FLIGHT UNLIMITED II

Loads of extra stuff, courtesy of the game's creators, Looking Glass Studios

ON THE CD

Eidos Interactive's shoot 'em-not has fun missions, grand graphics, superb radio comms, and provides a detailed rendition of the landscape on California's Pacific coast – including the magnificent land-locked harbour of San Francisco. Although lacking the monster coverage of other titles (with its many scenery packs, Microsoft's *Flight Sim* covers over 3000 international airports), it was well received by armchair pilots the world over and beat *Flight Simulator 98* to scoop the 'Best Non-Combat Sim' award at last year's E3.

ADVENTURE BUILDER (*fltabk.exe*) is the kosher *Flight Unlimited* map editor from Looking Glass Studios. It gives you the ability to build your own adventures replete with sounds, graphics, and even your own hoops course. Not especially friendly, but powerful nonetheless.

AREA 52 MAP (*area52.zip*) has been put together using the *Adventure Builder*. It includes several 3D models, military choppers, secret bases and CIA intrigue. One for conspiracy theorists.

FU2 ADPAC (*fltadpac.exe*) is a six-pack of adventures from the game's creators, Looking Glass Studios. As with all the other strap-on extras listed here, it requires the 1.04 upgrade patch.

FOKKER DR.1 (*fltfokk.exe*) is a new military plane from Looking Glass. With endless side-splitting permutations of the word Fokker ("What a Fokker!", "Fokker off!", "Fokker me!", etc), it's a must-have for all owners.

1.04 UPGRADE PATCH (*flt01-04.exe, flt02-04.exe and flt03-04.exe*) fixes a number of known problems, and is required if you want to install the additional planes, use the *Adventure Builder*, or try out third-party maps. Importantly for *FUII* fans, this version includes Vectors ILS (hurrah!) and is less likely to give you duff approach information. So if you're fed up with following tower instructions to the word and finding yourself crushed under the wheels of a departing jumbo, get this patch and your troubles should be over. PCZ

LOST IN CYBERSPACE

If all these natty patches, fixes and utilities are right up your alley, keep an eye on the following websites for the latest versions

GRAND THEFT AUTO GOURANGA www.grandtheftauto.com
JUNCTION25 http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/~scarecrow/jim/junction25
GTA CARS www.fifengr.com/gtacars
GTA EDITOR http://freespace.virgin.net/gavin.rudd/gtaed
AOEEDIT www.xmission.com/~mhoenie/aoe
SIEGE WORKSHOP http://age.gamestats.com/age
FLIGHT UNLIMITED II www.lglass.com/f2

WHY DON'T YOU...?

With the arrival of Windows-based development software, programming your own hacks and cracks no longer requires a Zanussi brain, three years spent learning machine code and a family-sized box of Pro-Plus.

The latest versions of Borland *Delphi* and Microsoft *Visual Basic* enable you to generate your own standalone applications with consummate ease and rapidity. Importantly, both languages are well supported and, contrary to popular belief, easy to learn.

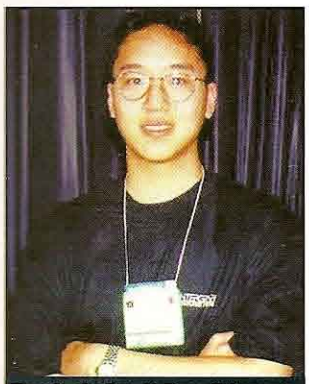
Of the two, Borland's tool tends to create faster, leaner code and provides you with a surprisingly small executable file – it wins many fans for that alone. *Delphi* may not have the Microsoft name or the raw power of C++, but its drag and drop simplicity and streamlined engine mean it's fast becoming the environment of choice for home users and professional programmers alike.

So if you've ever fancied writing your own game editor but have been put off by the complexities, help is at hand. Save them pennies and go get yourself a copy of *Delphi*.

Wireplay
The games network from BT

NEWSWIRE

The month's hottest news from Wireplay, the UK's Number One online gaming network



Thrash, aka Dennis Fong: flying over from California to take on Europe.

DON'T GET ME FONG

UK gamers will get the chance to take on Thresh, aka Dennis Fong, winner of the inaugural North American Professional Gamers' League (action category), and regarded as the world's finest *Quake* player (yep, even better than our boy Macca), in a head-to-head tournament this autumn.

Wireplay are flying the 20-year-old over from California to take on the cream of this country's *Quake II* players in a public event dubbed Quakeadelica, to be held in London this September. UK-based players can qualify for the finals by competing in a series of *Quake II* knockout games to be held on the Wireplay servers during late August. There's no news yet on the prize for the competition, but sadly it's unlikely to be the Ferrari 328GTS (previously owned by iD Software's John Carmack) which Thresh won in a tournament at last year's E³. We'll have more news on Wireplay Quakeadelica in the next issue of *PC Zone*. In the meantime, if you're keen to compete in the event or want to attend the final, keep an eye on www.wireplay.com for further details.

Check out our 'Obsessed with Quake' feature on page 80 to see where all this could lead.

Wireplay Quakeadelica

WIREPLAY CHARTS

SUMMER 1998

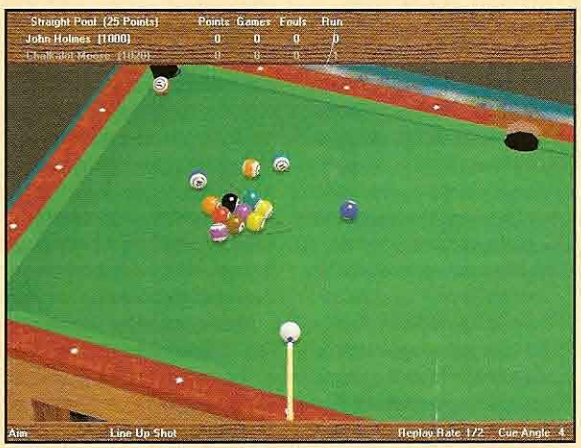
Ever wondered what the most popular games are on Wireplay? Here's the Wireplay chart as we reach the end of June

1. Quake
2. Quake II
3. Air Attack
4. Duke Nukem 3D
5. MUD 2
6. Age Of Empires
7. Red Alert
8. Total Annihilation
9. Jedi Knight
10. Bridge

WIREPLAY: YOU VERSUS US

That's you, dear readers, against us, here at *PC Zone*. Not US as in the USA and, say, their crappy little football team (2-1 against Iran? 'Defending' in the opposition's half? Oh, how we laughed). Whatever, this is your chance to come and 'ave a go and prove/disprove yer 'ard enough against some of this country's finest gamesplayers (you can put the gun down now, Mr Editor) on Wireplay. The dates/arrangements are as follows (note: when e-mailing us regarding Wireplay, please remember to state your nickname clearly).





WEDNESDAY 15 JULY

QUAKE II

Take on various members of the *PC Zone* posse at *Quake II* (don't worry, you'll know who we are by a unique identifier)

INFO: This is a free-for-all event – just log-in anytime from 6pm-9pm on the day. If you compete against us on the night, please e-mail Richie at **richie.pcz@dial.pipex.com** afterwards with the subject line "You're shit you aaaaah!" to tell us what you thought of our performance. Oh, and watch out for a special report in next month's issue.

PRIZES: The overall winner will be crowned our Player of the Month and sent £60 of HMV vouchers, courtesy of Wireplay, to spend on whatever he/she wants. Five copies of the *SpiceWorld* video anyone? No, thought not.

WEDNESDAY 22 JULY

VIRTUAL POOL II

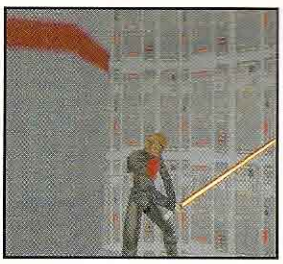
Come and take on 'Quick-wristed' Warren Chrismas at Interplay's smart pool simulator. But bring your own lager and tabs

INFO: Sorry, but the nature of the game (ie the fact that it's played one-against-one) means that we have to make this event invitation-only. E-mail Warren directly at **warren@escape.compulink.co.uk** before Monday 20 July with the subject line "I'm cool at Virtual Pool" if you'd like to play.
Eight readers will be chosen at random to compete and e-mailed details on game rules and start times (all games will be played at some time between 6pm-10pm).

PRIZES: Anyone who beats Warren over three frames will win a free Interplay game of their choice, courtesy of those nice people at Interplay themselves.

IN THE CLUB: JEDI KNIGHT

In the first of an irregular series on Wireplay's various clubs, we get the lowdown on the *Jedi Knight* crew



CLUB: Jedi Knight Club
CLUB CAPTAIN: BROON (Shaun Clark)
CONTACT: clarky@sclark.demon.co.uk
WEBSITE: www.sclark.demon.co.uk/index.html
CLUB HISTORY: Started in December 1997. The first tournament was played on 21 December, with a prize of £100 for the winner. Since the end of January there has been a competition every week.
TOURNAMENT STRUCTURE: At the end of April, club secretary DJ PMT set up a clan ladder from results of the weekly knockout tournaments (there are currently ten clans). An individual challenge ladder is also in the process of being set up.
GAME TIMES: Meetings are held every Sunday night at 8pm in the Jedi Tournament chat room, with everything kicking off properly at 8.10pm. There are also *Jedi Knight: Mysteries Of The Sith* events held every Tuesday night at 8pm, with Monday-night lightsaber-only tournaments starting soon.
CLUB RULES: No cheating (any hackers are banned from future events). All players must be in the chat room no later than ten minutes after the specified start time. Screenshots will be taken of the final scores to avoid any arguments. Players will be drawn against each other at random, with the winner proceeding to the next round. Anyone who sends the club captain a bottle of Newcastle *Broon* Ale gets an automatic bye.
BEST PLAYERS: Munkayman, Big Bird2 and MJR Pain, all of whom have recently won tournaments. Full rankings are posted on the Jedi Club website.

JEDI KNIGHT: TOP TIPS

(with thanks to Stamper2, Madmike and Eviiil One)

1. No matter how good you are at the game in single-player mode, you will need to practise the multiplayer game to become a true Jedi.
2. Spend time sorting out your keyboard and mouse set-up, configuring keys which you find easy to use and reach. You only have a split second in the game to find them.
3. Learn the levels, remembering where guns, ammo, bactor and surges are. They'll always help you.
4. Make sure you always have a good supply of ammo and extra weapons (in case your enemy steals your concussion rifle).
5. Using secondary fire with the lightsaber allows for a double-swing attack, the second swing of which is deadly and can kill an opponent with 100 health and armour. Position your body to the left of your opponent and time the second fire swing to cut across your enemy's body. When you're running at your enemy, duck and slice when you get close to them. Keep in mind that you must be running while doing the attack, like a slide attack. You can use Force Speed for this, but it's dangerous in areas with drops, such as the Valley of the Jedi.
6. Footwork: stay mobile and *always* face your opponent to block any attacks from him. Strafe-ing and jumping often confuses your attacker.
7. If you chose the Light Side, you must be competent with weapons as there aren't really any offensive Force powers. Also, avoid saber-only levels at all costs, as the Dark Side always has the advantage.
8. Use Force Pull to disarm your enemy, and use Absorb to stop your opponent doing it to you.
9. Instead of shooting directly at your enemy, try shooting at the ground by his feet.
10. The sign of a good player is one who knows when he is outgunned. Remember, it's best to run away, if it means not giving away a cheap kill.

WIREPLAY GAMES

Four new games, including Epic's *Unreal* (*PCZ* #65, 94%) and Microsoft's *Monster Truck Madness 2* (*PCZ* #65, 70%), have been added to the Wireplay roster, making a whopping total of 87 games (and variations of). The list is getting so long that we haven't got room to print all of the titles, but here are the best...

- Actua Golf 2
- Actua Soccer 2
- Air Attack
- Age Of Empires (inc trial version)
- Armored Fist 2
- Big Red Racing (inc Wireplay Edition)
- Blood (inc shareware v1.1)
- Command & Conquer
- Comanche 3
- **NEW!** Dark Omen
- Daytona Deluxe (inc demo)
- Descent/Descent 2 (inc demo)
- Doom (v1.9)/Doom II/ Ultimate Doom
- Doom Shareware (v1.666)
- Duke Nukem 3D
- EF2000: Wireplay Edition
- Extreme Assault
- F-22 ADF
- F/A-18 Korea
- Final Liberation
- Formula Karts
- Forsaken (inc demo)
- Fragile Allegiance
- G-Nome
- Incubation
- Jedi Knight (inc MOTS)
- Microsoft Flight Sim '98
- **NEW!** Monster Truck Madness 2
- MS Cart Precision Racing (inc demo)
- MUD II
- NASCAR 2
- NetMech
- **NEW!** Outwars
- Plane Crazy
- Quake/Quake II
- Red Alert (inc Counterstrike/Aftermath)
- Redneck Rampage
- Shadow Warrior (inc shareware)
- Sid Meier's Gettysburg
- Star Wars Supremacy
- Terminal Velocity
- Total Annihilation
- **NEW!** Unreal
- Uprising
- Various card and board games
- Virtua Fighter 2 (inc demo)
- Virtual Pool/Virtua Pool 2
- Virtual Snooker
- WarCraft 2 (inc demo)



WEDNESDAY 29 JULY

ACTUA SOCCER 2

Your chance to play *PC Zone*'s Editor, Jeremy Wells, recently crowned king of all UK journos at *Actua Soccer 2* (see *PCZ* #65 – and, yes, he did enjoy his trip to the World Cup, thanks)

INFO: Again, we're making this one invitation-only. E-mail Jeremy direct at **dh50@dial.pipex.com** before Monday 27 July with the subject line "I'm good at Actua too" if you'd like to play.
Eight readers will be chosen at random to compete and e-mailed details on game rules and start times (all games will be played at some time between 6pm-10pm).

PRIZES: Anyone who beats Jeremy will win a free game from the Gremlin range, courtesy of that luverly Sheffield-based posse.

FROM THE WIRES

Wireplay's QUAKE II servers have been reconfigured to use version 3.15 of the game, primarily because the newly available mission pack, *The Reckoning* (84%, *PCZ* #65), requires the upgrade. The necessary patch and any later additions (iD Software were due to release another patch, version 3.16, at the time of going to press) are available on Wireplay's website at www.wireplay.com.

Meanwhile, two new QUAKE II leagues are about to be launched. Anyone interested in joining should contact Mrs Paddok **(paddok@lineone.net)** or Veneer **(d.hicks@virgin.net).** Oh, and Wireplay have added a 64-player *Quake II* map, and competitors are invited to join in the fun at 3pm each Sunday afternoon (you'll need to download the map before you play).

QUAKE is still going strong on the service. A new *Painkeep 2* server has gone live, with 20 brand-new maps available free of charge from Wireplay's *Quake* Download Zone – and it's also on our cover CD. Those interested in joining the *Quake* leagues should contact Wuggs (waynes@dial.pipex.com), Jak Swan (jak.swan@cableol.co.uk) or Vengeance (vengeance@castlefields.demon.co.uk).

New leagues are also starting for AIR ATTACK, the multiplayer flight sim which is available free of charge. Details on the leagues are available from TK421 **(dyn@evans.prestel.co.uk)** and Daddus **(gjh@orangenet.co.uk)** and at **www.westernisles.demon.co.uk/AirAttack.**

WIN £40! **And finally... Wireplay is holding a QUAKE II screenshot contest (no, really), with £40 in HMV vouchers up for grabs for the sender of the best entry. To stand a chance of winning, grab an amusing/gory/arty/whatever screenshot by pressing F12 during the game, and send the saved file to wirenews@wireplay.com with the subject line "PCZ Q2 Piccies" by 31 July. Now imagine what it's like taking several hundred screenshots for each issue of *PC Zone*...**



Okay, it's not *Quake II*, but here's a shot that the Wireplay *Duke Nukem* Club made earlier. Apparently, it took them two hours to set up. Bless 'em.

Wireplay
The games network from BT

THE LIONHEAD DIARIES



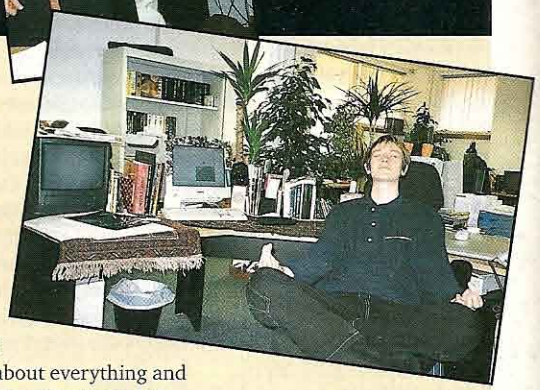


We continue our fascinating insider's view of the making of *Black & White*, the first game to come from new developers, Lionhead

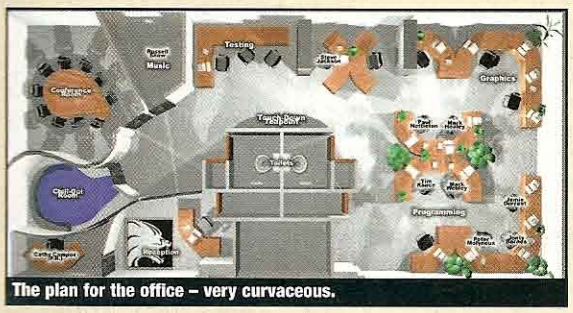
WORDS Steve Jackson



New artist Jamie Durrant and his pet Face Hugger. Note the Internet camera on the wall above Jamie's desk. Artist Mark Healey meditates at his desk – sorry, his *shrine*.



PART 7: HOME SWEET HOME



The plan for the office – very curvaceous.

It seemed almost ironic that we should move to the University of Surrey Research Park. Lionhead's new den was a mere stone's throw from Bullfrog's old lily pad on the very same estate. Six different companies were bidding for our new office in Frederick Sanger Rd. But, thanks to Peter's reputation with the Research Park management, Lionhead won the contest and we got the lease.

Bullfrog is well-known in Guildford as a local success story. This definitely helped convince the landlords that they should favour Lionhead's application. Huge semi-circular desks were ordered, big enough for everyone to have two PCs, plenty of work space, store their CD collections – even host a game of Monopoly without disturbing any of their work. Eight-foot aluminium-trimmed doors were fixed into place, with stainless steel space invaders for handles. The reception chairs were sculptured planks of plywood fitted with black velvet cushions and wiggly chromed legs. Fifty thousand pounds' worth of mixing desks and audio effects machines were installed in the sound studio. And a pear-shaped room was built into the design; a place with oddly curved walls so programmers have somewhere to chill out during late-night sessions.

The whole project was kept under wraps until the building work was completed. Apart from Tim Rance and myself, no one – not even Peter – was allowed in until the office was ready. When the Lionhead team finally arrived to view their new home, big smiles spread across everyone's faces. Out came the champagne. Everyone strutted around beaming proudly, and argued playfully about where they were going to sit. Artist Mark Healey drove into Guildford immediately to buy decorations for his new desk. He returned with half a dozen pot plants, a bag full of brightly polished stones (to be glued around his monitor), and a prayer mat which he spread lovingly across his desk. His desk has now become his 'temple'. He also bought some kind of ju-ju rattle made from dried seed husks. Now, when faced with a particularly frustrating piece of animation that won't work properly, he gets up and walks slowly around his desk chanting and shaking his rattle like an Apache medicine man. Weird...

NEW BLOOD

In our plush new offices, we now had all the expansion space we needed. Finally we could take on new staff. A job advertisement in *Edge* magazine had brought in over 100 replies. Our first new recruit was Russell Shaw as Head of Music. Russell is incredibly enthusiastic about everything and has the habit of calling everyone 'mate', like a Cockney. Ask him what he thinks of the game you lent him over the weekend and he'll tell you: "Phwoar. Amazing, mate. Really good. Yep. Thanks a lot, mate. Brilliant. Great. Yep." The other day I overheard him talking to his wife on the phone: "I'll be home around 7.30. Yep. Brilliant. See you later, mate."

In spite of the fact that Russell is the only one of us with his own room, he leaves his door open. As he plays loops of music over and over again, there are now three or four tracks permanently inscribed on our brains. No doubt these will find their way on to our website in time.

> **"Faced with frustrating animation that won't work properly, Mark gets up and walks around his desk chanting and shaking his rattle like an Apache medicine man"**

The fact that our website is up and running at all is thanks to another new face at Lionhead, Jamie Durrant. Jamie impressed everyone with his art portfolio and was offered a job when we moved into the Research Park. During his interview, he suggested we take a look at his own website. Though he's employed as an artist, he's a talented site designer, and within a fortnight of starting he'd designed a website for us which featured an interactive logo puzzle, a Net camera permanently taking shots of what's happening at Lionhead, jokes, puzzles, biographies, histories, links to other pages and more. If you want to see what Jamie has done to the Lionhead site, go to **www.lionhead.co.uk.**

Another big bonus of working at the new office is that we all seem to get more work done. What's more, the E3 show in May was a great motivator. As a result, the test bed version of *Black & White* is progressing well. Peter's plan is that we produce a simple version first to test the gameplay; no flashy graphics or intricate animations, just a basic working version which we can all play, test, modify and play again. Once we're happy with this version, it will be handed over to the artists who will replace the test bed sprites with wondrous works of art. Next month I'll illustrate the progress of the game from its earliest stages to the version shown at E3 in May. PCZ

Co-founder of Games Workshop, author of Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks, *game designer, and columnist for* The Daily Telegraph, *Steve Jackson is now a director of start-up games developer, Lionhead.*

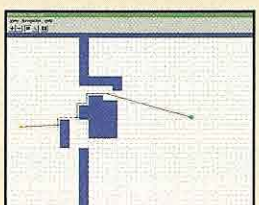
Part 8 is in next month's issue, out Thursday 6 August.



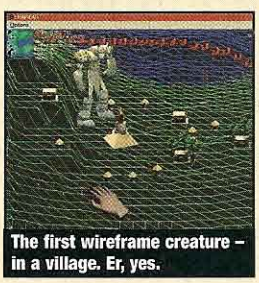
Egypt from the sea – obvious now we've said, yes?



An ogre appears in the Egypt village. Time for lunch.



What do you mean, is this all we've done?



The first wireframe creature – in a village. Er, yes.

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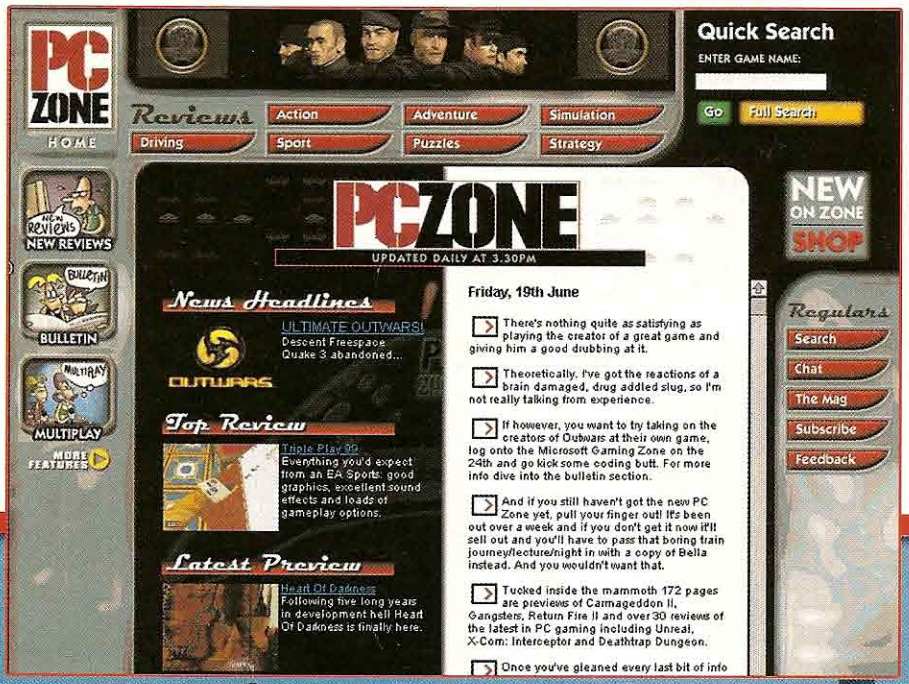


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THE BITTER END



All the daft stuff we couldn't cram in anywhere else

JOKER Charlie Brooker

THE INDY CHART

What with LucasArts announcing a new *Indiana Jones* game, we thought the time was right for this: an easy-to-use *Indiana Jones* movie title generator. Just pick one phrase from column A, another from column B, and read the result aloud. Ready? Altogether now: "Indiana Jones and the...

Infernal	Machine
Golden	Leopard
Enchanted	Dagger
Angry	Cathedral
Tormented	Galleon
Unknown	Mask
Night of the	Cellist
Treacherous	Cabal
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Brazilian	Breakfast Cereal
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Porcelain	Phallus
Levitating	Pie
Useless	Stuff
Doncaster	Mystery
Priestesses'	Shed
Hilarious	Maze
Bendy	Lower Classes
Pissy Poo	Piss

Golden Shovel Awards

Each month we dish out our coveted awards to press releases whose devotion to bullshit knows no bounds

We Hate Kids Award "Welcome to *My Disney Kitchen*, a fun-filled interactive kitchen that blends the world of cooking with your child's imagination... the perfect recipe for fun."

Disney Interactive, on *My Disney Kitchen*

– Not to mention flour and broken eggs all over the sideboard.

Huh? Award "The gamer... will have a great deal of fun solving riddles using a completely different set of rules of conscious."

Cryo Interactive, *Ring* press release

– We just can't believe they're actually calling it Ring...

Overblown Enthusiasm Award "The Spice Girls correspond perfectly with the PlayStation – they have power, they are exciting to watch, sound great and appeal to all ages, men and women alike."

Sony bigwig Chris Deering, launching *SpiceWorld: The Game*

– AND they're both cheap, plastic and soulless, tend to induce wrist strain among teenage boys, and aren't half as popular as they used to be.



PONIES OUST SPODS IN TECH JOB WAR

Sketch-artist chimpanzees will aid equine programming revolution

FROM OUR TECHNOLOGY CORRESPONDENT Duncan Doughnuts

The nation's programmers are said to be "stunned" by reports that a leading computer games company plans to replace its workforce with a troupe of computer-literate ponies. Vital Interactive, responsible for hit titles *Omniphobe* and *Cudgel Patrol*, made the shock announcement yesterday afternoon. The move was immediately condemned by the National Union of Coders.

"It's hard to convey just how serious this is," said spokesman Matthew Fleming. "It effectively spells the end of traditional programming methods altogether."

Vital Interactive chairman Bob Lake was quick to defend the decision. "Obviously we're sorry to let the humans go, but in a competitive industry like this it's imperative to keep an eye on the future. Ponies are the way ahead."

The company aims to have the animals in place by September. They will enter data using a range of oversized keyboards developed specifically for the horse programming project. "Since ponies have hooves instead of fingers or hands, each individual key needs to be about eight inches across," explained Lake. "They can't be made out of plastic, either – it shatters too easily. We're using large cuts of wood."

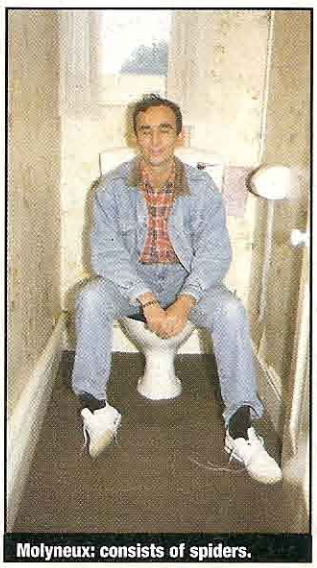
Standard computer monitors are also rendered useless because equine brains are incapable of processing the complex visual stimuli they emit. Instead, the company has been forced to come up with an imaginative alternative. "We've got a team of chimpanzees armed with blackboards and chalk," explains Lake. "They simply stare at the screen, sketch what they see, and hold up the result for the ponies to look at. It sounds daft, but in practice it works excellently."

Lake confesses there are still problems to be ironed out: "The chimps are our biggest headache. They're always tossing the blackboards at each other and eating the chalk. You have to be firm or they misbehave. We make an example of the worst troublemakers by caning them in front of the others. It's been a long struggle, but they're gradually learning to conform. We'll break their spirit."

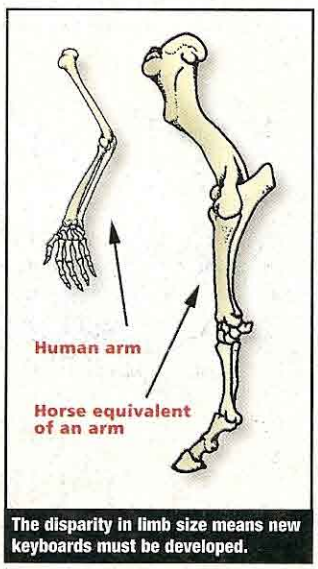
Vital's shock decision is the second zoological revelation to have rocked the games industry this month: last week respected industry icon Peter Molyneux was revealed to be nothing more than a large colony of highly choreographed spiders hidden beneath a layer of fake skin and pretending to be human.

Not that the animal kingdom should consider its new position secure by any means. "We're starting to look way beyond ponies now," muses Lake. "By the year 2010, we're confident our entire output will be created exclusively by various types of fruit. We've been experimenting with apples, and already they've knocked up a decent shareware version of *Pong*. There's no telling where it will all end."

Games are sick and wrong.



Molyneux: consists of spiders.



The disparity in limb size means new keyboards must be developed.

INFOBOX: PONIES

- The average horse lives to be 30, unless the owner smacks its brains out with a hammer during a psychotic episode.
- During the Victorian era, horses were at war with donkeys. In 1886, thousands of ponies were kicked to death at the Battle of Preston. In 1922, both sides signed a declaration calling for an end to hostilities and banning the use of spiked horseshoes and amplified neighing devices.
- Although they are beautiful and submissive animals, it is illegal to go beyond 'base one' with a horse.



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